

Entertaining Gandhi



By courtesy of Sjt. Kanu Desai.

By MURIEL LESTER

IVOR NICHOLSON & WATSON LTD.
44 ESSEX STREET

ENTERTAINING GANDHI

THE scene of this book is laid in the heart of East London. Mr. Gandhi had written from India, "When I come to London I want to stay with the same sort of people as those to whom I've given my life here." So the people of the East End opened houses and heart to him. Navvies and dockies, factory girls and unemployed walk unconcernedly in and out of these pages—as well as such people as Tolstoi's daughter, Charlie Chaplin, and the Princess of Italy and Romain Rolland. "Truth is God, and the way to Him is Non-Violence." Thus Mr. Gandhi sums up his religion.

A workman made a speech about him after he'd left. "A skinny little bloke with a funny face. That's how the papers had shown him to us. But he wasn't that sort of chap at all . . . I live just opposite. I watched all his ways. I reckon he was a man you must admire. I'm not religious myself, but . . ."



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MR. GANDHI AT WORK IN HIS KNIGHTSBRIDGE OFFICE

Note his motto, "Truth is God," above the signature

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BY
MURIEL LESTER

1932

IVOR NICHOLSON & WATSON
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CHAPTER I

THE TWO ASHRAMS

I WAS taking my farewell of Mr. Gandhi.

“Will you please come to England?” I asked him.

“What is the use?” he queried with his genial smile. “I have not had such success here with my own people that I have anything to teach you and your good people in England.”

Swiftly I decided, before he said more, to seize my advantage.

“I don’t want you to come to teach us,” I announced; “I want you to come to learn from us.”

His laughter was good to hear, and I knew that that shaft had got home.

He promised me there and then that he would come, but only on certain conditions, the last of which was that I should spread the facts throughout Great Britain concerning Excise (drink and opium), and make our Government and our people see that they must no longer thwart India’s passion for prohibition.

After a few moments’ consideration I said: “I think I might have a shot at that.”

When Mr. Gandhi subsequently came to this

country, it was with us at Kingsley Hall that he stayed. Kingsley Hall is a centre of fellowship in the midst of a large industrial district of East London and is run for the most part by the people of its neighbourhood who work out their own salvation, educationally, socially and spiritually. Ten volunteers give whole-time service and receive food, seven shillings a week and a cell on the flat roof as their portion; ignoring barriers of creed, class and nation, they serve in unity, cooking or organising, cleaning or teaching, scrubbing or praying. The strength of Kingsley Hall lies in the practice of the presence of God, as taught by Jesus Christ, and is an effort towards the Kingdom of God on earth. Our ideals and our aspirations at Kingsley Hall have much in common with those of Mr. Gandhi's Ashram.*

I had had the privilege of staying by the banks of the River Sabarmati with some two hundred of Mr. Gandhi's followers, men, women and children, all of them following a simple rule of life not at all strange to anyone accustomed to our life in East London. There was the same sharing of the house-work, the same absence of class distinctions, the same ignoring of sectarian labels, the same sleeping out of doors, the same gaiety that voluntary poverty brings, the same joy that comes from breaking down all national barriers, the same sure hold on reality that comes from constant prayer.

The inmates were a strictly disciplined set of people, their lives regulated by the imposition of certain vows.

* Ashram = Educational, religious and social settlement.

We got up at 3.50 a.m., bathed, met for forty minutes' prayer, fetched our water, did our house-cleaning, washed our clothes—though I hated the approved fashion of standing in the river to do this; the fishes seemed distinctly to prefer the taste of white calves to brown. We span, cooked, ate, studied, swam in the river and attended Mr. Gandhi's series of lectures on the Sermon on the Mount. Here gathered business men from Ahmedabad as well as all the college students, each of whom had a large Bible under his arm. Pictures of scenes from the New Testament adorned the walls. Flowers in brass pots stood on the floor, sweet-smelling tapers burned, Eastern music set our spirits in tune to listen to Mr. Gandhi's exposition of St. Matthew's fifth chapter.

In August 1914 a handful of men in various European chancelleries had issued ultimatums to each other. Was their action capable of reversing the whole process of nature and suddenly converting children of God, brothers, friends, into murderous enemies just because they happened to live on opposite sides of a river or a mountain or an artificially drawn boundary line?

Kingsley Hall people said, No. We refused to pronounce a moratorium on the Sermon on the Mount for the duration of war. We could not conceive of God as a nationalist; we knew that, strange as it might appear, the Germans were as dear and precious in His sight as the Allies.

Forthwith we became extraordinarily unpopular

among high and low. Anonymous letters threatening to "do us in" were received from local people. Police raids, threats of vitriol throwing, social boycott, virtual excommunication and organised hooliganism enlivened our days.

Now ten years later I found that the inmates of this Indian Ashram were amazed to hear of the adventures we had had in ours. In their naïveté they thought English people had no struggles and ignominies to endure. They thought they alone believed in non-violence. We exchanged ideas. I told them of the numerous groups to be found in almost every European city, as well as in most parts of America, who hold this unshakable creed, who put into practice Christ's method of overcoming evil by good, choosing to suffer rather than to make others suffer. They told me how they had discovered that disarmament of the body was not enough, one's mind also must be disarmed, set free, all bitterness and malice rooted out, all self-pity, jealousy and hate destroyed.

Besides this vow of Non-violence they hold to four others. The vow of the Purity of the Palate is interpreted as meaning you must not eat for the sake of any pleasure to be found in the act but only to keep yourself alive, well and vigorous. We in Bow are not anywhere near even trying to keep this vow. We like food. Ours is good but so plain that an invitation out to tea, dinner or supper is a something to be accepted with gusto.

The third vow is Chastity. In their stupendous

efforts to get rid of their ancient religious custom of child-marriage, they apply this rule even to their married members.

The fourth vow is Truth. The introduction of this rule into politics is perhaps Mr. Gandhi's most important contribution towards the solution of the world's troubles. Spies need be feared no longer; they can be welcomed, even entertained by those whose programme is always sent to their opponents before it is put into operation. Complete frankness, the laying of all one's cards on the table, the speaking out of the truth, even to people who do not want to hear it, even if it lead to prison—Kingsley Hall has employed these methods from its foundation in February 1915, and many an awkward situation that mere tact could never have rectified, many a misunderstanding that was speedily developing into alienation and bitterness, has been cleared up and antagonism has been converted into a deep and fruitful friendship by the use of the weapon of truth. A motto was well coined by one of our adventurers, "When in doubt try frankness."

The fifth and last vow is Non-theft. The Ashram people must own nothing but the bare necessities, dress in the garments of the poorest, remember constantly that the average income of Indian people is $2\frac{1}{2}d.$ a day; and that this computation takes into consideration the immense riches of the Maharajahs and the wealth of the millionaires; they must eschew all luxury, travel third class, eat sparingly and give their lives to the service of the poor.

This is how Mr. Gandhi addressed the admired,

super-patriotic students in Benares Hindu University: " You are justly proud of your university and you are very happy here. You like to think that all you are enjoying is the gift of your own race, that for your learning you are indebted to no alien government, to none but Indian benefactors. But I tell you you are mistaken. You are deeply in debt to the poorest peasant. It is the ryots who keep you and clothe you and feed you. It is the poor who built these splendid halls. This place was created by the blood and sweat of workmen. You will never be free of your debt to them unless, when you leave here, you devote the rest of your life to their service."

Before we knew much about Mr. Gandhi, however, a group of us in East London had called on the public through the Press to consider the claims of voluntary poverty. On March 15th, 1921, this appeal was given publicity in the columns of the *Daily News*.*

Quite a number of people came at the appointed hour. As a result a Chapter of the Brethren of the Common Table was formed in East London. Some twelve people joined and every month we met, dock labourers and professionals, a widow receiving parish relief and a factory girl, an heiress and a curate, to share together our experiences of finance. We each announced the details of our budget for the past four weeks and then stated our actual needs. With some the balance was heavy on the wrong side; obviously the " Dockie's " family of eleven needed

* See Appendix A.

something more than 30s. worth of food every week; obviously the widow ought to be able to give her young, growing boys and girls some fruit occasionally and vegetables more than once a week. Bread, margarine and tea would not produce a very fine physique to stand the strain and stress of adolescence later on. With the rich members there was always an unspent balance which tended to grow larger and larger as they came to understand the monetary basis of health and fitness and the equally salutary fact that materialism, cynicism and atheism are very often the result of financial considerations.

Soon it dawned on us that it was a mockery to kneel together at the Communion Table where God's greatest gift to man was symbolised, where the Host was unseen, Christ Himself, where all His guests were equally honoured and equally provided with the invaluable gifts of fellowship and joy, and then forthwith to disperse—some to a board groaning with good things and to faultless service by trained servants, some to a cold back room where the tea, bread and margarine would have to be sparingly distributed. A new significance was now apparent to us in the pronouncement of early Christian writers. “Thou shalt communicate in all things with thy neighbour; thou shalt not call things thine own; for if ye are communicants in the things that cannot pass away, how much more in the things that can?” “If you possess superfluities while your brethren lack necessities, you are possessing the goods of others and are therefore stealing.”

The Ashram people listened by the hour as I told them of the adventures some of us had been led into by this voluntary poverty. How an heiress, convinced that land-hunger was one of the great troubles among the English people, spent all she had to buy a tract of land and gave it to the people of the neighbourhood, joyfully removing the "Trespassers will be Prosecuted" notices, hacking down the barbed wire, exhibiting instead the words "Free to the Public"; how another refused her considerable portion when she became of age and by its means saved a weekly newspaper whose struggles to tell the truth had ruined its financial prospects; how another member gave back to the working people to be used as they thought best the money she had inherited which had been made in their neighbourhood a generation or two previously. This was called the Restitution Fund, and the terms of its Trust Deed provided that "whereas the annuitant is of opinion that she has no right to accept this income while her neighbours lack necessities, holding that God's law of providing bountifully for all is more wise, sane and decent than the law of the land which secures to a few people more than they need while the many have to endure less than they need," the annuity should be handed back to the people in order "to enrich and widen their common life."

I found that one of the rich Hindu women had had almost precisely the same experience as this. She took me with her one day to see her old luxurious home. She showed me her new home among the

working people, the cotton mill hands of Ahmedabad. She explained their wretched state, the overcrowding, how the drinking habit was growing among them because the unnatural conditions of industrial life compelled them to ignore the old village sanctions and the old religious restraints. She introduced me to the city's Medical Officer, who drove me round to see things as they were and gave me the terrible figures of infant mortality there. I noticed the working mothers' habit of doping their babies every morning to keep them quiet at home out of danger during their long absence, the necessity of letting the toddlers sleep on the floor of the factory and crawl about below the machinery. I was taken to the Nursery School and Crèche she had set up and the headquarters of the Trade Union she had formed. She introduced me to a band of Mr. Gandhi's volunteers who had set up no less than twenty-two schools in that city alone, several of which were devoted to Untouchables, where Brahmins lived side by side with their "unclean" brothers, treated them as honourable scholars and helped thus to build up their self-respect and a new social order.

Once she had led a great strike of cotton workers, even though her beloved brother was one of the chief mill-owners of the city. After a six weeks struggle the strikers gained a reduction in the hours of the working day, from twelve to ten, raised the age for child workers from ten to twelve and increased all wages by thirty-three and a third per cent.

On the last evening of my stay at the Ashram we were assembled as usual for our prayers on the sandy ground by the banks of the river. I understood none of the words chanted, neither the Sanskrit scriptures nor their accompanying translation and exposition in Gujerati, but the Spirit depends on no language, and natural beauty still unmarred by man educes peace. This time, however, we were to have one of the Christian hymns printed in English at the end of the Ashram prayer book. It was Mr. Gandhi's favourite; the only two Christians present were asked to sing it. Among Hindus self-consciousness is not the bane that we find it in our adolescent race, so we banished it, forgot our unmusical voices and thought only of the universal interpretation of Isaac Watts' poem as we sang together:

“ When I survey the wondrous cross
Where the young Prince of glory died,
My richest gain I count but loss,
And pour contempt on all my pride.”

We said our good-byes, knowing that a link had been forged between the Ashram in the East and the one in the West that nothing could ever break.

CHAPTER II

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY AND A SOAP-BOX

ON my return to Bow there seemed more than usual to be done. A normal working day at Kingsley Hall is long; our weekly programme touches many hundreds of people. To live in a community like ours is almost like living in public, for the doors are never shut and there is a continuous coming and going of neighbours, members, unemployed and voluntary helpers who each feel the place is their own, and who therefore bring their joys and sorrows along to share with us.

I called them together, passed on to them Mr. Gandhi's challenge, instructed them as to what I had seen in India and learnt from the lips of highly placed British officials, from leading missionaries, from Excise officials and from the India Office in London.

I told them I must go out and spread the knowledge of facts. Would they carry on the work in Bow, giving themselves even more than they had heretofore done in voluntary service for the building up of the Kingdom of Heaven in this part of London?

They took on the responsibility and I began my task.

I wrote a leaflet* entitled "A Challenge," and, armed with twenty thousand copies of these, I accepted every invitation to speak that came my way.

I spoke on improvised platforms, soap-boxes, at street corners where Communists poured out torrents of violent abuse on Mr. Gandhi because of his principle of non-violence, in the parks where two or three hundred people used to listen with rapt attention, at chapels and churches and lecture societies, at Universities and temperance meetings, lunches, Rotary Clubs, literary clubs, at international meetings, students' meetings and at branches of the National Council of Women.

My resolution was passed in most unlikely places, including the Old Guildhall at Exeter, though I forget under whose auspices the meeting was held that carried out this audacious act.

Opposition was engineered of course, as it always is when vested interests are touched. I was referred to as "a so-called Miss Lester" and was given almost as much attention as an escaped convict. They could, however, wax as sarcastic as they liked, but they could not discount my facts.

Sometimes after a meeting someone in the audience who had been in India almost as many years as I had been days, would pour scorn upon my facts; but it was always easy to answer such criticisms, as I had been careful to get the mind of the highest authorities on the subject, both in India and in London, before I spoke. Mr. Gandhi's vow of

* See Appendix B.

truth proved of infinite value; one's position was unassailable when one could quote from the India Office's own publications and from pamphlets given to one in Government House, Bombay.

Eventually I was invited to speak at the annual national conference of the Methodist Church, and there the whole body pledged itself to the support of my campaign.

The most awe-inspiring occasion, however, was the night in Edinburgh when I, as an outsider, without a drop of Scottish or even Presbyterian blood in my veins, a mere woman withal, had to stand up at the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland and orate to the orderly ranks of reverend gentlemen seated in tiers reaching from the floor almost to the ceiling. I was coached as to the correct way to address this august body and I thoroughly revelled in pronouncing the resounding words of introduction. I felt like St. Paul before the crowd in Philippi as I stood up and began: "Mr. Moderator, fathers and brethren."

Meanwhile, the Simon Committee was appointed and I felt tremendously anxious that its chairman should be acquainted with what I had discovered concerning the inner workings of the Indian mind, before he set foot on Indian soil. I knew from what Lord Lytton had told me how difficult it was to get frank interchange of views and opinions between British officials and nationalist Indians. I wanted Sir John to know about the Indian conviction that Christians cannot exist without beef and beer, and what a barrier this false notion had

created between the two races. I wanted him to know that one of the chief causes of friction between Great Britain and India is liquor; to a Hindu and a Moslem moderate drinking is a sin only indulged in by Untouchables and westernised Indians. I wanted to tell him how approachable Mr. Gandhi was; although the Commission was going to be boycotted by the Congress, I was convinced he could have his wish and meet Mr. Gandhi if he would go in the name of God, as a private citizen. I knew my friend, Professor Gangulee, had been able to interpret the Indian mind to Lord Irwin before he set out from London in 1926 to begin his Viceregal work. Their talk ranged over many aspects of life and together they faced many apparently insoluble problems. But they would not give way to pessimism. "What is there in common between Briton and Indian?" they asked of each other. After a time of quiet the answer came clear. The one thing in common was the spirit, the biggest thing of all.

So, heartened by the splendid results of this interview and greatly daring, I asked Sir John for ten minutes of his valuable time. He kept me in his office talking to me for an hour and a quarter, but alas it was obvious from the first five minutes that no useful purpose was being served.

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I had been carrying on the lectures for eighteen months when, at the Indian National Congress held in December 1928, the pronouncement was made that the Congress Working Committee would wait

one more year for the British Government to consider the position, to fulfil their promises and to give India her freedom. If this was not granted by December 1929, they would restart civil disobedience. The Indian students were furious at being held back another year. Their passion for independence was such that Mr. Gandhi's slow and patient methods seemed to them mere weakness. The Indian Communists had been sowing violent seed for many years. "We shan't be able to hold these hotheads back much longer," I heard one of the old leaders say, when a fiery appeal for violence, as the only weapon appreciated by the West, had just been concluded. But Mr. Gandhi stood his ground. He was jeered at, hissed and booed. "Down with Gandhiji,"* was being shouted on all sides. But he continued his propaganda. "Freedom is the gift of God," he said, "the right of every nation. We may not deserve it, even as some nations who enjoy it to-day may not deserve it. That is not for us to judge. It comes from God. We can claim it, but if we claim it by methods repugnant to God, it will never be a blessing to us. We must win it by self-suffering. You must have no hate nor bitterness against the British. They are a fine people. It is only their system of government you must hate. You must honour and love them. You must see that not a hair of their heads is hurt. Rivers of blood may have to flow before we gain our freedom, but it must be our own blood. We may not shed anybody else's."

* Ji added to a surname is a mark of respect or affection.

This sort of talk did not suit the students. They turned to Jaharwarlal Nehru and put themselves under his leadership forthwith. This young man is an intensely interesting personality. His father, Pandit Motilal Nehru, was one of India's greatest men; theirs was one of the old ruling families. They were very rich; young Jaharwarlal had had a Western education, he enjoyed Western luxuries, he used to go big-game hunting; he was something of a dandy and was said to send his linen to Paris every week to be washed. Little by little he came under the influence of Mr. Gandhi. He began to consider the condition of the poor, to doubt his own right to such great possessions, and eventually he threw in his lot with the workers. He became President of the Indian Trade Union Congress and afterwards of the National Congress. I met him in London after his visit to Russia, where he was studying what social changes could better the state of peasants. For some time he stayed in Switzerland with his delicate wife. He became friends with Romain Rolland and sent his daughter to a boarding school in Switzerland and then returned to India.

Devoted to Gandhi as he was, he was nevertheless a born fighter. He could school his spirit to follow Gandhi's methods though they were not what he would have chosen. He was temperamental. He rejoiced in the fiery enthusiasm of young rebels as much as they rejoiced in him.

As the year of grace wore on, I began to grow

anxious. There seemed to be word neither in Parliament nor Press to show people here at home how forces were aligning themselves in India. It seemed to me that a sinister race was in progress between the Communist school of violence, including Jaharwarlal Nehru and the peace-loving elements both in Great Britain and in India. Yet no one seemed to be bothering about it.

Now that Labour was again in office and a new Secretary of State instituted at the India Office I thought I would make another effort at intervention. The Parliamentary Under-Secretary received me very kindly and asked me many questions. When we came to plans, however, although he was eager to do all that was possible for peace, yet it seemed to me that the situation was felt to be almost hopeless. We seemed to be shackled by the wrongdoing of the past. There was a vicious circle in being and apparently no way out.

“But it’s easy to slip into a vicious circle like that,” I ventured to expostulate. “It’s always difficult to get out of a rut, but we *can* get out. Can’t you visualise some sort of thrust through of the spirit? It has happened over and over again. It can happen now.”

At the end of an hour I came away feeling that defeatism could accomplish little and most assuredly not the great achievement such as we longed to witness both in Britain and in India: the triumph of truth, spiritual forces and non-violence.

How was I then to get the ear of the sorely tried and harassed official class? How could I induce

them to attempt a new orientation? How could I help them to recognise in the two Indian leaders whom they had clapped into gaol, the symbols of two opposing methods, violence and non-violence, aggression and self-suffering, the impatience of youth and the patience of the man of God?

What else could I do but pray? Prayer always thrusts one out into action sooner or later. One of its main functions is to induce one to think creatively; it stretches the imagination; it enables one to see things and people not as they are but as they might be; it strips the pomp, the sense of power and the static security from the person prayed for and permits one to see him as he is in God's sight, a mere child, needing help, needing courage, needing enlightenment from God as definitely as an infant needs the care of its mother. So out of my prayer, early one morning, a letter came to be written.

A group of us who loved our country with an ever-growing passion was convinced that in Lord Irwin, England had given her very best to India. Quiet, wise, courageous, alert to the trend of events, yet all the time aware of spiritual values, from the moment of his arrival in India, he had been recognised by Mr. Gandhi and his followers as a man of God. He was recognised by others as the man in all India most nearly akin in spirit to Mr. Gandhi himself. I set to work and composed the letter, explaining something of the inwardness of the situation as I saw it and then appealing to my correspondents to pray daily for the four men who held

key positions, Lord Irwin, the Prime Minister, Mr. Wedgwood Benn and Mr. Gandhi, to link them continually to God in their thoughts, insistently to hold them in His enlightening Presence.

Over a hundred of these letters were sent out to friends in England, India, America and the Continent.

Meanwhile strange things were happening in India, though the Press was silent, until one morning a ray of light was to be seen percolating through the columns of the *Daily Herald*. George Slocombe had visited Gandhi's prison. Some Indian Liberals were talking of a peace move. Correspondence was encouraged between the various Indian leaders. Letters were being carried from one to the other of the various places of incarceration.

Hope grew and then suddenly subsided again. It had all come to nothing, so the papers said. They quoted a sentence or two from Jawaharlal Nehru's letter to Mr. Gandhi, "I am a born fighter. I enjoy fighting."

"What intransigence! How can we deal with such a man?" Such was the reaction of the British public. Poor press-ridden British public! They contract with such pathetic exactitude those opinions that their manipulators desire them to hold. And all the time they are continuing to pride themselves on the sturdy independence of their character.

Those of us who had access to the actual correspondence itself, rather than to merely tendentious excerpts carefully meted out to newspaper readers, felt a great load suddenly lifted off our minds.

Gone was the continual haunting fear lest with Mr. Gandhi's death Jawaharlal Nehru should throw away the weapon of non-violence, for thus ran the young man's letter to the Indian leader:

“ DEAR BAPU,—Let me congratulate you on the new India that you have evoked with your magic touch. Never have I felt so proud of my fellow-countrymen, yes, and women and children too, as I do to-day. The story of their doings has reached an almost epic splendour. I was a born fighter. I enjoy fighting, but here, in the quiet of this prison cell, I have become wholly converted to your doctrine of non-violence and I am convinced that if only we can keep it up to the end, our independence will be assured.”*

* Appendix B, “A Challenge.”

CHAPTER III

WISE MEN SHOULD COME TO THE EAST

FOR many years I have had a conviction that wisdom abides in the East End of London. Ever since I first came to Bow thirty years ago I have been learning from its inhabitants; my education is not by any means complete nor have I yet attained their high standard of courage, gaiety and endurance. During these years several hundreds of young people have come to live with us here at Kingsley Hall or Children's House. They have come, men, women and girls, direct from school, after completing their university course, and in middle age, from country and city, from Australia and America, from Ceylon and Switzerland.

Most of them have found peace and learnt wisdom from our neighbours in the East.

The East End is more restful than the West. Its inhabitants are not such temporary citizens as are the denizens of Mayfair. They do not flit about, coming and going, renting and letting their houses and flats. They remind one of the peasants of feudal times, attached to the soil.

I have often wished that a politician's education should be counted incomplete unless he had served

a term of living with working people, learning their point of view. The successive Ministers of Health would have avoided many pitfalls if they had had personal experience as to how some of their ever-increasing legion of regulations work out in terms of flesh and blood. Our politicians ought to be wiser than they are. Possibly to write B.A. or K.G. or O.B.E. after one's name implies education and experience, but living in Bow would provide more of each. It is not enough for them to live in a settlement where they may get middle-class service and comfort. They must live in the ordinary shoddily built house in a mean street and observe and listen and learn. Then they may acquire philosophy and statesmanship as well as knowledge and political shrewdness.

To people who daily have to face the stark-naked facts of hunger and homelessness, the watching of one's children slowly pine for want of nourishment, God is either reality or nothing at all. Vague phrases, fine-sounding words, subtle shibboleths have no meaning for them. A creed that cannot be lived out in daily life has no significance. But their sense of the presence of God is real and it is this that gives them courage. It is not possible to be involved in the troubles of ecclesiastics, in jealousy for the prestige of one's own little section of Christendom, when the great fact of God's presence, God's understanding, God's suffering with suffering humanity, are never for one instant forgettable. Church life is often very real in East London and Church meetings not things to attend from a sense of duty, in

order to set an example, or to encourage the poor minister, but times of joyous refreshment, oases in a wilderness.

Because of my experience in Mr. Gandhi's Ashram, I had been completely convinced from the start that he would be happier here in Bow than anywhere else in London, and directly we heard he was coming to the Round Table Conference, I sent him an invitation to stay at Kingsley Hall. He wrote back: "Of course I would rather stay at Kingsley Hall than anywhere else, but there will probably be a reception committee arranging my stay in London. I cannot override their decision. I advise you to get in touch with them at once and show them this letter. I am in their hands." On receipt of his letter I did not lose a single hour, but went straight up to Mr. Henry Polak's office and reported to him my invitation.

"Oh, but it is impossible," he said. "Think of the inconvenience in being so far away from Westminster and St. James's. Of course he would enjoy it and of course it is the right sort of place for him to stay in, but it is quite out of the question."

As it happened C. F. Andrews was also in Mr. Polak's office. He had received a letter from Mr. Gandhi that morning almost identical with mine, and he said: "I know he would be much happier at Bow than anywhere else, but I don't really see how he can be so far away from the centre."

I would not take the seat they offered me. I knew I had got to stand my ground and make a tremendous fight. I tried to speak in the quiet

impersonal tone of one desirous only of the success of the conference. "Mr. Polak, of course I can't deny what you say. I want him to come to us—it would be so good for our Bow people to get to know him, and it would be a joy to us to entertain him, but I can assure you that though of course I am biassed, I have a clear and complete conviction that it would be best, for him and for his mission too, were he to stay in East London. Everybody knows what his views are about poverty. He mustn't even appear to give them up because he has to come to London. Why should he suddenly change his way of life because he comes West, when quite a number of us here are already living out a daily programme something like his? When we are hopeful that the Round Table Conference is to begin a new era in the history of India, isn't it fitting that the chief representative of India should initiate a new way of life for ambassadors and plenipotentiaries from foreign lands? Haven't we noticed for many years that conference after conference on Disarmament and other subjects meets, holds daily sessions, and then breaks up accomplishing little? Isn't that perhaps due to the air of unreality that permeates the proceedings when the members themselves are dumped down in some completely artificial atmosphere like Dorchester House or the Savoy Hotel? Isn't it time that a new line was struck? And anyway, where is it more fitting for a man representing the poorest people of India to live than among the poorest people of London? "

Mr. Polak smiled at my tirade. "I quite agree with you," he said, "but we have got to be practical. We have got to think of his health."

"Why, that's exactly why I make this proposal," I assured him. "In the West End the air is stale, used, loaded with petrol fumes; the tall buildings keep the breezes from the streets. In Bow the air is far purer, far more bracing. We get the breeze from the river. We are nearer to Southend, of most blessed reputation. Experts have several times tested the air of East London and pronounced it better than that of the West End. Didn't you know that, Mr. Polak?"

"No, I didn't," he admitted, laughingly.

"But it is true. We always feel the difference when we emerge from the Underground into our good, broad Bow Road. We have trees planted down nearly all our little streets. We have a fine flat roof where he can sleep out and get all the sunshine there is, and you who lived with him so long in Africa know how irked and worried he would be by servants and all the other conventions of a middle-class household. When it comes to his early morning prayer time, we don't want people to be harassed and look surprised and feel awkward. We have our early morning prayer time anyhow, whether he is here or not. We shan't have to alter things much. Our normal life will go on. He will feel himself perfectly at home. Isn't it better to be free of all inner conflicts than to have the advantage of a ten-minutes drive instead of a forty-minutes drive home each night? I have never been more

sure of anything in my life than I am now that Mr. Gandhi would be happier and healthier with us in Bow than in any other part of London."

"You are a good advocate, Miss Lester," said Mr. Polak, "but I must still assure you that it is impossible."

Intuition, however, assured me that my case was won.

During the next few weeks Kingsley Hall had visits from a good many friends of Mr. Gandhi, Indian and British; we used to ask each his opinion: "Do you think he'll come here to stay?"

"I hope so," was the usual polite answer, but with those who knew him best it was, "I am certain he will."

Three different Sadhus came to visit us. The first was Christian, the second Buddhist and the third Hindu. Each wore the saffron robe which denotes a heart and life devoted to God. The Bow people enjoyed their quiet way of speaking, their gentle, dignified movement and their assured manners. When called upon to address meetings they would first of all subside into a silence wherein the audience too seemed to become receptive to the peace of God.

Both the Buddhist and the Hindu seemed to attach different meanings to certain words from those commonly accepted. I noticed that the word "religion" had a definitely unpleasant significance for them, and this made discussion rather misleading. We spent some time trying to arrive at a mutual understanding of terms. The Christian

Sadhu stayed with us for a week and made a great impression on Bow folk. He had a real spiritual power and a wealth of experience gathered not only on lonely pilgrimages along robber-infested roads, where hunger, tempest and cold attacked him, but in the world of business too, where evil was just as real, though camouflaged by the politeness of society.

One Wednesday afternoon an Indian couple came to our Women's meeting. My heart sank when I heard that they were sent to me by a very high official representing India in this country. Why should they just happen to come to-day? I asked myself. This afternoon's programme would surely and effectively damp down any enthusiasm for Kingsley Hall that might be developing in Government circles. Should I tell Mrs. Ridgwell to keep silent and postpone her carefully prepared little speech until next week? I put the temptation sternly away from me, gritted my teeth and called upon this member of ours, this wise, experienced East End mother, to give the report of her doings on the previous Saturday.

She told the meeting how some sixty friends, men and women, had decided to go to the Royal Air Force display at Hendon and make their witness against war; how she and many Kingsley Hall people had taken leaflets and distributed them among the hundred thousand people assembled there to watch the sport; how dozens of speeches had been delivered to the spectators, calling upon them to think out things more carefully. It had

always been a source of undiluted blessing to man, the lovely blue sky and the clear atmosphere, but now death haunted it so that even our own Nursery School children on an outing in Epping Forest, hearing aeroplanes buzzing overhead, looked up eagerly and watched them out of sight; then a four-year-old boy turned round to his young school-mates, exclaiming: "There, that's what I'm going to be when I'm big. I'm going up in an aeroplane to drop bombs on all of yez."

"It's not right to bring young children up like that," announced Mrs. Ridgwell, and an answering passion was discernible among the crowds of women in the body of the hall.

I managed to forget my visitors and their probable reaction to all this until the meeting was over. Then as we went upstairs the Indian woman said to me: "I was pleased to hear that speaker. My husband and I were at Hendon last Saturday. We thought it the most terrible thing we'd ever seen in our lives. We supposed it was because we were Hindus that we hated it so. We took it for granted that no European would feel as we did about it, and then suddenly we saw you people. We saw your leaflets being distributed and your banners showing; we were so happy; we said to each other: 'Then India is not the only place after all where people hate violence.' "

Pundit Mohan Malaviya's son drove over with his children from the Arya Bhavan in Hampstead to inspect Kingsley Hall. He made several suggestions as to Mr. Gandhi's comfort. The children of

Bow crowded round his car. They had seen plenty of men and women from India, but never any children before. They were highly delighted and proportionately noisy. "Miss, they weren't 'arf nice," they told me afterwards.

"Yes," I said, "but you must be careful, you know, not to get too excited when Indian people come in their cars. Those children might have felt awkward with so many of you crowding round and climbing up on the footboards and looking in at the windows."

"Oh, no, they didn't, Miss, they were laughing."

"What about forming a sort of bodyguard of the boys about here," I suggested, "to look after all the Indians who come and to explain to other boys and girls who don't understand what their habits and customs are?"

"Wot are they, Miss?"

"Well, in India people come crowding round Mr. Gandhi wherever he goes, but they never shake hands with each other out there."

"Don't they, Miss?"

"No, they go like this instead," and I put my hands together in a salaam. "You see your hands get very hot and sticky in India and it is better to do it this way. Then though they come crowding round Mr. Gandhi they keep very quiet. I have seen three or four hundred stand for hours just on the chance of getting a glimpse of him; but you wouldn't have known they were there, they were so absolutely silent."

"O-o-oh," said one very doubtfully; but the rest

were concentrating their attention with shining eyes on a most exemplary silence.

"You'll like Mr. Gandhi," I said, "he is very fond of children."

"Miss, 'ow ju say 'is name? Gandee or Gandy?"

I gave them the best pronunciation I could and left them to disperse, thoughtfully and quietly repeating the name to themselves.

CHAPTER IV

THE PRESS ARRIVES AT KINGSLEY HALL

“MR. GANDHI is the best news value in the world, always excepting of course the Prince of Wales.” So went Fleet Street talk, and now Kingsley Hall was going to be given its chance to reap some of the golden harvest.

Well-set-up gentlemen would call on me and make proposals such as that I share with their firm half the profits accruing from sole Press rights in Mr. Gandhi’s visit. Others merely asked that I should invest their firm with this privilege, apparently as a free gift from me to them.

A continuous stream of callers began to appear, from moving-picture people, gramophone companies, and photographers. I was tracked by wire, ’phone or in person, sometimes far down into the depths of the country. I was followed by one man who begged a few written words of introduction that he might present to Mr. Gandhi on his landing at Marseilles. He had booked his passage there already, and if I would do this thing, I would receive £100 for the scrap of notepaper.

“But how can I sell my guest?” I inquired.

Only after a steady pursuit extending over several

weeks and a series of lengthy conversations was he convinced of my obduracy. "Well, Miss Lester," he concluded, "if you will do your best for us to interest Mr. Gandhi in this business proposition of ours, promise or no promise, and whether you fail or succeed, my firm will give your Hall £100."

None of the wonderful offers materialised, but the interviews at first proved to be great fun and I imagined it would be a good opportunity to get across some of Mr. Gandhi's philosophy to the British public, to stretch their imagination a little, to develop among them some insight into the Indian situation, to prepare them for the great task that lay ahead—the decision as to the future of three hundred and sixty million people for whom at present they were responsible and of whose aspirations many of them knew less than nothing. But after a few weeks I gave it up.

The luggage brought by the movietone people intrigued us greatly. On three different occasions films were made of Kingsley Hall, and helping make them was a thrilling experience for the members of our household and any unemployed man who happened to be on the premises at the time. After all, it is rather like a miracle to be standing alone by one's bedroom door, to have no earphones, no loud-speaker, no microphone in evidence and suddenly to hear in quiet and intimate tones: "What you said just now, Miss Lester, sounded very nice and clear. Say it again, do you mind?"

Of course there ensued the usual sort of quarrel engendered by publicity propaganda. When they

took a picture of two of our men, squatting on the floor, polishing some rather jolly brass jugs and bowls we keep near the Altar, they forthwith misinterpreted the scene, saying: "Here are some of Miss Lester's helpers preparing for Mr. Gandhi's arrival." My pride felt damaged, for to polish brasses four weeks in advance could scarcely be called good housekeeping, and I objected also to their describing our ordinary methods of housework as a sensational preparation for a visitor.

It was a queer experience to see oneself on the screen in a cinema, but far more extraordinary to hear oneself talk. I had no idea my voice sounded like that, and it was strangely disconcerting to hear someone else's voice from the row behind exclaiming in an irritated tone, "Oh, now we're going to hear that Lester woman."

Despite the spate of eager gentlemen, each competing for my exclusive attention, for my ear, for my words, for my knowledge of Mr. Gandhi, very little seemed to appear in the columns of their respective papers except irrelevancies. The articles were long enough; paper, not to be measured by inches but by the foot, was covered with accounts of chats between the journalists and me, but I looked in vain for any information about my guest or India. Most that was written about him was trivial —pastrycook's ware rather than good solid food. The British public read assiduously half a column or so a day about Mr. Gandhi and still knew nothing. An East Ender summed up the situation thus: "The papers have been publishing something

almost every day about Mr. Gandhi for months, but they've not told us anything about him yet except that he wears a loin-cloth and drinks goat's milk."

Even these two facts were so completely distorted that they misled people rather than enlightened them. It seemed to be generally supposed that a loin-cloth left a man half-naked, whereas anyone who saw Mr. Gandhi found to his surprise that he was quite a well-covered person; his dhotie and his fine-spun cashmere shawl seemed as effective in keeping out the cold as any well-cut suit.

The subject of goats soon became a threadbare jest to us at Kingsley Hall. We heard that a flock of them for the special use of the Mahatma was to be stabled on our roof, that he liked to watch his goat being milked, and many other silly lies all tending to portray an egoistic, eccentric oddity. Actually we found him quite as happy with lemonade as with milk and liking to eat without fuss the ordinary products of whatever country he was visiting, inquiring when he was offered a dish of fruit: "Which of all these is British grown?" and choosing that as assiduously as any Imperialist Advertising propagandist.

The papers further misinformed us that the s.s. *Rajputana* was carrying to London a ton of mud from the sacred Ganges so that the Hindu leaders could make idols for the comfort of believers during their sojourn in London.

The unfailing succession of these fairy tales issued by the Press goes to prove that one British Institu-

tion at any rate is not lacking in imagination. Neither were the Communists lacking in imagination, as the following extracts prove, culled from a pamphlet they printed and distributed widely in East London. It was thrust under every door and discussed in many a saloon bar:

“The Indian princes, landlords and capitalists . . . are using Gandhi, who poses as a saint and a holy man, as their cunning agent. He is coming here to enter into a closer alliance with the British Imperialists and to secure further rights for the Indian capitalists. His whole life has been a mass of deceit. He has always pretended to be non-violent, but he has always taken an active part in all the wars of British capitalism. . . . This Gandhi is attempting to throw dust in the eyes of the British workers by staying as a friend and guest at Kingsley Hall in the East End of London. He is pretending in this way to be the friend of the workers, whereas he is one of the greatest enemies of workers and peasants in India. . . . The dramatic tactics of his not putting on a shirt and living on vegetables and goat’s milk should not mislead the working class. Such tactics are adopted to serve the ends of capitalist interests in the East.”

The *Children’s Newspaper* heralded Mr. Gandhi as a “Simpleton,” possibly to the great satisfaction of its parental readers.

Truth referred to him as a “Humbug,” and I heard one of its readers zealously passing the phrase across the table at a May Meeting lunch.

I suppose it was their having read the newspapers

so regularly that induced people to become perturbed at hearing that Mr. Gandhi was about to arrive in England.

My post-bag contained some wonderful epistles now. ". . . As a patriot how *can* you harbour this man? Shameful if you do." ". . . You should be deported." "How any British woman can contemplate having a naked nigger in her house passes my comprehension." One started, "Repent! How can you entertain an old devil like Gandhi! What can you be thinking about—an Englishwoman. . . . Black people should know their place."

Of course there were numbers of delightful letters from equally unknown people who were appreciative of the invitation we had given. One, from an eminent British author, enclosed a cheque for £50 towards his entertainment, although it cost, of course, nothing like so much as this.

The letter we liked best, however, was from a Lancashire textile worker.

18 — Street,
Accrington,
Lancashire.

July 1st, 1931.

DEAR MISS LESTER,

I sincerely trust that you will pardon me for taking the liberty of addressing this letter to you, but when you have perused it very carefully, I think that you will fully appreciate my honest and sincere endeavours to be of some service to my fellow-men. Permit me to point out with the greatest respect that according to Press reports I believe that when Mr. Gandhi visits England as a representative of the Indian people he will most likely be one of your honoured guests. And I fervently hope and trust that Mr. Gandhi will endeavour to spare a little of his precious time to pay a visit to the biggest cotton town in Lancashire, namely Blackburn. I, as a work-

ing man who depends upon the Lancashire cotton industry for a living in common with a few other million workers who have no other means of earning their daily bread, would only be too pleased if Mr. Gandhi would visit Lancashire, for I believe that some good of a permanent and lasting character would accrue to the mutual benefit of the Lancashire "cotton worker" and our fellow-working men in India. The "economic boycott" of Lancashire cotton goods is having a very serious effect upon the economic status of the working-class in Lancashire. Need I say that at a cursory glance a visitor to the Lancashire cotton towns could not discern the economic hardship that hundreds of thousands of working-class people in Lancashire are enduring; one will soon realise how the workers endeavour to retain their respectability despite the terrible trade conditions that are prevailing in their midst. You will find them respectably dressed and perhaps paying a visit to a local picture show which will cost them a few coppers in order to forget for a short time at any rate their Economic misery, but also they have in a great majority of instances to make great sacrifices in the necessities of life, and the worst feature of it is that little children cannot have all the nourishing food they require owing to the fact that their parents cannot afford to get it for them. May I say, or need I say that I am a "Lancashire working man" who is to some extent suffering through the action of the "Indian Congress leaders"? I have a profound admiration for Mr. Gandhi and a great many of my fellow-workers in Lancashire share that spirit of admiration for Mr. Gandhi. We are very anxious to see our fellow Indian workers raised upon a higher economic plane of life, and we would only be too pleased if we could assist them by whatever means in our power to enable them to achieve their laudable object. But I believe it is in the realm of practicable possibility to assist our Indian fellow-workers to a higher standard of living and at the same time for our friend Mr. Gandhi and his Indian colleagues to modify their views upon the Economic Boycott of Lancashire cotton goods, for Lancashire is essentially a manufacturing county and cannot be converted into an agricultural county, therefore the workers of Lancashire must either manufacture cotton goods or live in a state of perpetual economic misery.

Yours faithfully,

A. B.

P.S.—I will be very grateful if you will kindly pass this letter on to Mr. Gandhi, as I should like to meet him one day and talk to him.

The following is a quotation from one of the weekly letters to India from Mr. Gandhi's secretary, the Brahmin, Mahadev Desai: "The representative of the *Daily Mail* interviewed Gandhiji on board the *Rajputana*. He was present at the reception given by the students and sent off telegrams to his newspapers most mischievously misrepresenting what Gandhiji has said. In the special train taking us to Boulogne from Marseilles Gandhiji gave his friend a stern lecture. He had represented that the reception was by rebellious Indian students. It was entirely organised by the students of Marseilles. Without caring to print a single relevant extract from the speech, he had said Gandhiji propagated hatred of British rule! He was asked to point out a single phrase or sentence in corroboration of his statement. 'I was surprised that you brought in politics,' he continued to repeat feebly in self-defence. 'You must understand,' said Gandhiji, 'that I cannot isolate politics from the deepest things of my life, for the simple reason that my politics are not corrupt; they are inextricably bound up with non-violence and truth. As I have said often enough, I would far rather that India perished than that she won her freedom at the sacrifice of truth.' Then there were vague insinuations which again he could not substantiate. Poor man! He had not expected that he would be thus called to account. 'Mr. —, you are perambulating round the suburbs of veracity.' Crowds had lined even the streets of Marseilles, to our great surprise, as Gandhiji was taken to the meeting-

place. But the *Daily Mail* friend reported that 'Gandhiji was disappointed at the poor reception.' 'How did you know that I was disappointed at the poor reception? And why did you say that the gift from a British colonel of a woman's corset annoyed me, when I said I was not amused? He said, 'Amusement perhaps meant annoyance.' 'Well then, I may tell you that I have a sense of humour which saves me from annoyance over these things. If I was lacking in it I should have gone mad by now. For instance, I should go mad over this article of yours. It is up to me to say that you have packed this article with things which are far from the truth and I should have nothing to do with you. But I do not do so and would continue to give you an interview as often as you came.' He seemed to squirm under the trouncing, but was by no means repentant.

"But truth seems to be a very unwelcome guest in the journalistic sanctum, and even reputed journalists with no inclination to misrepresent, love to 'embroider' the truth. For instance, Mr. Mills, the American Associated Press Correspondent who has been with us for a long time, who knows Gandhiji's dislikes, could not do without embroidering the truth about his life on the boat. He described the prayer scenes, the attraction of the spinning-wheel and many other things, but felt that the picture would be devoid of 'colour' without a cat in it to share Gandhiji's milk every evening! Even so Mr. Slocombe, who made a name by publishing that thrilling account of his interview with Gandhiji in

Yeravada Jail, wrote in the *Evening Standard* eulogising Gandhiji's generosity, and felt that the picture would be incomplete without a concrete instance. He drew upon his imagination and represented Gandhiji as prostrating himself before the Prince of Wales when he came to India! 'Well, Mr. Slocombe, I should have expected you to know better. This does not do credit to your imagination even,' said Gandhiji. 'I would bend the knee before the poorest scavenger, the poorest Untouchable in India, for having participated in crushing him for centuries; I would even take the dust off his feet. But I would not prostrate myself even before the King, much less before the Prince of Wales.' "

CHAPTER V

MR. GANDHI AND THE ETHER

A SURGING crowd stood for hours in the Euston Road on the afternoon of Mr. Gandhi's arrival in London. Friends' House was besieged. My neighbour from Canning Town, Dr. Katial, had brought me up from Bow in the car he had offered to put at the disposal of our guest during the whole of his stay. We found it difficult to get to the door, so intense was the eagerness of those who had not been able to get tickets of admission. Inside the building, along the corridors and round the entry, a little group of his personal friends waited. Some who had seen him last in South Africa were wondering if long absence would prove to have changed him or themselves beyond recognition.

At last there was a stir at the door. A slight figure followed by a tall, dignified Brahmin mounted the three steps. Mr. Laurence Housman stepped forward to welcome Mr. Gandhi to London. There was a moment of complete satisfaction, then a little pause; we all held back in our desire not to push forward; each honouring the other's prior claim. He just stood still gazing at the scene, smiling, overjoyed.

"Here's a friend of yours," someone said, and the words broke the spell.

"Well," he said, and we clasped hands.

There were eager greetings on all sides now. When they were over he was offered food but refused to keep the huge crowd waiting.

We filed up the stairs on to the platform. A great storm of cheering arose as Mr. Gandhi stood at last face to face with his British admirers.

Mr. Laurence Housman greeted his appearance in a perfect little speech. "We welcome you as bringing something which is not generally understood—the unification of politics and religion. In church we are all sinners, but in politics everyone else is a sinner—that is a correct description of our daily life, and you have come to call upon us to search our hearts and to declare what our religion is. You are a strange man. You are strange to many, even in your own country. You are a stranger to the people in my country. You are so sincere that you make some of us suspicious, and you are so simple that you bewilder some of us."

It was pouring with rain as we made our way eastwards, but in Bow the crowds were assembled inside and outside Kingsley Hall to welcome him; the Mayor, Aldermen and Borough Councillors, clergy, ministers and teachers, doctors and lawyers, workmen, mothers, neighbours and friends and members of every section of Kingsley Hall. Downstairs in the Place of Worship, upstairs in the club-room and the reading-room, he found delighted people everywhere, though their patient waiting

had extended to two or three hours. When he had responded to their greetings, he went over to the balcony and salaamed the throng in the street below. Then at last he was free to feel at home. We went up to the roof, the five cells were allocated, the luggage brought up, a meal served and at seven o'clock we all joined in prayer.

Then began the inrush of journalists and visitors from the West End who never ceased to call until December.

On Sunday, his second day in London, Mr. Gandhi's supper was fixed for 5.45 p.m. so that he could be ready to give a half-hour's talk to America at 6.30 p.m. But the crowds of people who had been visiting him on the roof all day seemed inexhaustible, and when at length he began to eat his oranges and grapes, the latter always for him a lengthy proceeding, he was still surrounded by friends, talking amicably and leisurely. I warned him at 6.10 p.m. that the time was approaching, but he seemed unimpressed by the news.

There had been a good deal of rivalry between different personages whose interests were entangled with broadcasting. The movietone firm were extremely disappointed that Mr. Gandhi would not let himself be photographed and the gramophone people were quarrelling. In consequence the hour had been altered several times, as had also the list of approved persons who were to be admitted to our sitting-room to hear the half-hour's talk. Among other details they had repeatedly changed their plans as to who was to introduce him. At first it

was to be one of the Americans who were responsible for the broadcasting, then they asked if I would make a five-minutes introduction, describing Kingsley Hall to American listeners. The latest plan, however, was to have nothing but a prefatory sentence or two given by one of their officials.

At 6.20 p.m. one of our workers came up to prepare Mr. Gandhi, but still he sat entertaining his friends and seemingly uninterested in anything except his immediate surroundings. Before returning to cope with the apprehensive Broadcasting officials downstairs I made a final attempt to get him to realise that the ether was valuable, and the talk important. At 6.28 p.m. I said: "The ether won't wait, Bapu." * But he knew it would, and why shouldn't it? It's the one thing perhaps that can wait and does wait and will wait, as serenely unhurried and completely imperturbable as Bapu himself. It makes no account of the high commercial value set upon it by advertisers.

Downstairs there was an actual trial of physical strength in progress. Unauthorised reporters, having told lies downstairs, tried to storm our sitting-room by force, but the doorkeepers' stolid quietness effectually barred their entry. I was becoming perturbed, and seizing the rough notes I had made in the morning, when the programme still included a five-minutes talk by me, I entered the room at 6.30.

I found the psychological contrast between the

* Bapu = the familiar name by which he is known all over India.

personalities who were crowded into the sitting-room exquisitely amusing. The men who were making a financial scoop of the American message looked portentously solemn: the Press Association reporters highly gratified: the efficient engineers thoroughly preoccupied with switches, wires, levers, lights and signals.

They looked behind me for my guest—I couldn't help laughing. "He's still eating his supper," I whispered, for the operator had that instant received the signal and the United States of America was now linked up to our sitting-room. In a broadcast studio one learns to carry on quite important conversations by eyebrow-lifting and we all seemed to understand each other's wishes. The announcer's voice went out over the Atlantic.

"I'm speaking from Kingsley Hall, Bow, East London, where Mr. Gandhi arrived yesterday. In front of the microphone sits Miss Lester, who is his hostess. I have pleasure in introducing her to the listeners of the United States of America."

My notes were sketchy; moreover, I had no idea how far I must spin them out before Mr. Gandhi's supper would be properly over; but all such considerations were fruitless. My job was to concentrate on introducing Americans to my beloved Kingsley Hall and to say why Mr. Gandhi had chosen to stay here rather than anywhere else. When I had arrived at the beginning of the sixth and last page, four minutes and a half had gone; then out of the corner of my eye I saw the door open and the villain of the piece composedly enter

the room, as though he were acting according to plan. Such innocence of expression precluded any imputation of guilt. As I talked I got up, rather cleverly I thought, from the chair and he settled himself on it, sitting cross-legged and comfortable in preparation for his lengthy dissertation. As I announced the concluding words introducing Mr. Gandhi, I turned the microphone to face him. He touched it rather gingerly.

“Do I talk into this thing?” he inquired in a low voice, which was nevertheless duly registered in California. Then there was silence. With shut eyes he bowed his head and seemed to withdraw within himself as though to gather all his energies together, so that God might work through him. Then he began.

“In my opinion, the Indian Conference bears in its consequence not only upon India but upon the world. India is by itself almost a continent. It contains one-fifth of the human race. It represents one of the most ancient civilisations. It has traditions handed down from ten thousands of years, some of which to the astonishment of the world remain intact. No doubt the ravages of time have affected the purity of that civilisation, as they have that of many other cultures and many institutions.

“If India is to perpetuate the glory of her ancient past it can only do so when it attains freedom. The reason for the struggle which has drawn the attention of the world does not lie in the fact that we Indians are fighting for our liberty, but in the

fact that the means adopted by us have not been adopted by any other people of whom we have any record. The means adopted are not violence, not bloodshed, not diplomacy as one understands it nowadays, but they are purely and simply truth and non-violence. No wonder that the attention of the world is directed towards this attempt to lead a successful, bloodless revolution. Hitherto nations have fought in the manner of the brute. They have wreaked vengeance upon those whom they have considered to be their enemies.

“ We find in searching national anthems adopted by great nations that they contain imprecations upon the so-called enemy. They have vowed destruction and have not hesitated to take the name of God and seek Divine assistance for the destruction of the enemy. We in India have reversed the process. We feel that the law that governs creation is not the law that should guide the human race. That law is inconsistent with human dignity.

“ I personally would wait, if need be, for ages rather than seek to attain the freedom of my country through bloody means. I feel in the innermost recesses of my heart, after a political experience extending over an unbroken period of close upon thirty-five years, that the world is sick unto death of blood-spilling. It is seeking a way out, and I flatter myself with the belief that perhaps it will be the privilege of the ancient land of India to show that way out to the hungering world.

“ I have therefore no hesitation whatsoever in inviting all the great nations of the earth to give

their co-operation to India in her mighty struggle. It must be a sight worth contemplating and treasuring that millions of people have given themselves to suffering without retaliation in order that they might vindicate the dignity and honour of the nation.

“ I have called that suffering a process of self-purification. It is my certain conviction that no man loses his freedom except through his own weakness. I am painfully conscious of our own weaknesses. We represent in India all the principal religions of the earth, and it is a matter of deep humiliation to confess that we are a house divided against itself; that we Hindus and Mussulmans are flying at one another. It is a matter of still deeper humiliation to me that we Hindus regard several millions of our own kith and kin as too degraded for our touch. I refer to the so-called ‘untouchables.’

“ These are no small weaknesses in a nation struggling to be free. You will find that in this struggle for self-purification we have assigned as a foremost part of our creed the removal of this curse of ‘untouchability’ and the attainment of unity amongst all the different classes and communities of India representing the different creeds.

“ It is along the same lines that we seek to rid our land of the curse of drink. Happily for us, intoxicating drinks and drugs are confined to comparatively a very small number of people, largely factory hands and the like. Fortunately for us the drink and drug curse is accepted as a curse. It is

considered not to be the fashion for men and women to drink and take intoxicating drugs. All the same it is an uphill fight that we are fighting in trying to remove this evil from our midst.

“ It is a matter of great regret, deep regret, for me to have to say that the existing Government has made of this evil a source of very large revenue, amounting to nearly twenty-five crores* of rupees. But I am thankful to say that the women of India have risen to the occasion in combating it by peaceful means, that is, by a fervent appeal to those who are given to the drink habit to give it up, and by an equally fervent appeal to the liquor-dealers. A great impression has been created upon those who are addicted to drink and drug-taking.

“ I wish that it were possible for me to say that in this at least we were receiving the hearty co-operation of the rulers. If we could only have received their co-operation without any legislation, I dare say that we would have achieved this reform and banished intoxicating drink and drugs from our afflicted land.

“ There is a force which has constructive effect and which has been put forth by the nation during this struggle. That is the great care for the semi-starved millions scattered throughout the 700,000 villages dotted over a surface 1,900 miles long and 1,500 miles broad. It is a painful phenomenon that these simple villagers, through no fault of their own, have nearly six months of the year idle upon their hands.

* Crore = 10,000. Rupee = one shilling and sixpence.

“ The time was not very long ago when every village was self-sufficient in regard to the two primary human wants, food and clothing. Unfortunately for us, the East India Company, by means which I would prefer not to describe, destroyed that supplementary village industry; and the millions of spinners who had become famous through the cunning of their deft fingers for drawing the finest thread, such as has never yet been drawn by modern machinery, these village spinners found themselves one fine morning with their noble occupation gone. From that day forward India has become progressively poor.

“ No matter what may be said to the contrary, it is an historical fact that before the advent of the East India Company, these villagers were not idle, and he who wants may see to-day that these villages are idle. It therefore required no great effort or learning to know that these villagers must starve if they cannot work for six months in the year.

“ May I not then, on behalf of these semi-starved millions, appeal to the conscience of the world to come to the rescue of a people dying in the attempt to regain its liberty? ”

We heard afterwards from American friends that during the whole half-hour's talk there was distinctly audible an undercurrent of clear, sharp little staccato sounds of a strange, almost mischievous quality, reminiscent of Puck or goblins. This proved to be the joyful noises from swings, roundabouts and seesaws ascending from the children's

playground far down below up to our sitting-room window.

Our evening service began almost immediately the broadcasting was finished, and Mr. Gandhi gave an address on "Prayer." At 8.30 p.m. he drove off to the West End to a reception, where he was to meet the Prime Minister and other great ones of the earth.

CHAPTER VI

THE SEWER WALK BY STARLIGHT

“AND now I suppose I shall never be able to go out again except in a car.” Mr. Gandhi looked at me questioningly as he spoke these words, as though he would know the worst and was determined to make the best of it. We had just arrived at Kingsley Hall after a long series of welcomes and greetings that had begun at Folkestone at one o’clock and it was now half-past six.

“Why ever not?” I answered, laughing at the swift change in his expression, from determined patience to delight.

“I thought perhaps it would cause trouble with the people or the police,” he said.

“They’re just longing to know you, Bapu,” I answered. “You can go where you like. The detectives will be within sight, of course; we can’t help that; it’s one of our native customs. You’ve got the best officers in the country.* And you can do as you like.”

After a day or two we were setting out at half-

* Sergeant Evans and Sergeant Rogers know many crowned heads personally and professionally. Their zeal and concern for Mr. Gandhi’s comfort were constant.

past five each morning for an hour's walk. The pace was swift, the route varied. There are not many beautiful walks in Bow, but the one we usually chose suited us to perfection. It begins with St. Leonard's Street, which is our main road to the Dock Gates and Blackwall Tunnel. Then it turns down Three Mill Lane, which narrows into a mere cobbled path where it crosses the river, a few hundred yards below Bow Bridge. Here Kemball and Bishop's stretches its untidy, chemical-scarred length along the water's side; from its glassless windows green, pink and mud-coloured refuse shoots into the barges moored beneath; on the other side of the water stand the three mills connected with the manufacture of gin from which the street derives its name. First comes the warehouse; long and dignified it looks; there is no sign of life about it; it is never seen open, it has the look of a fortress or a dungeon with its three rows of windows, eighty of them on one side of the building alone, all kept decently closed, reticent and self-confident, while the solemn, slow and expensive process of maturing gin goes on within all the time.

On the far side of it is another stretch of water and then comes the distillery, its clock tower mellowed with age, generous and gracious in design. Then the granary where men, whose clothes and faces are powdered with fine flour, dispose of sacks of grain which has been ground by the water-mill opposite. On the left side of the path a row of eighteenth-century dwelling-houses stands. Their

back windows look up towards Bow Bridge and from their front rooms one can see down-stream to where the canal meets the Bow Creek and the River Lee. Across these arms of water stretches the strong metal bridge over which the electric trains run down to Barking. Bright scarlet underground trains look beautiful in daylight, raised up high above water and silhouetted against a wide expanse of sky, but by starlight they are more impressive, for they cast down from their track a continuous shower of electric sparks towards the water beneath. Its glassy surface also reflects the brilliant illumination of the crowded coaches as they career overhead, clanging curving flashes of bright gold.

A young man bearing one of the most honoured names in England became interested once in Kingsley Hall through an open-air meeting we held in Hyde Park. Hope swelled to a tremendous girth. I took him for a walk round Bow, showed him some of the crumbling rat-ridden houses, introduced him to several neighbours whom we met in the streets, and gave him a proper "fish-and-chips" supper. I was thinking all the time, if this man's pen, if his family's and friends' support were available for us, how great a help it would be for our people. But unfortunately I made the mistake of extending our walk to the place where the three stretches of water meet. It was moonlight and he stood on the bridge motionless, completely entranced by all he saw. The silver and dark blue of the sky, the sudden flash past of the gold-lit trains, the quiet black waters beneath us, the tall, stern, straight

façade of Kemball and Bishop's, it all went to his head like champagne.

He broke the silence at last. "It's Venice," he said. "There's the Doge's palace."

My heart sank; if he was going to be æsthetically enslaved he would never fight for us. I felt like the heathen king who hired Balaam to curse the Israelites and found the disconcerting prophet was blessing them instead. I hurried him away and chose another point of vantage a couple of hundred yards higher up by a long stretch of water. I knew this to be a sordid place; on its dirty oily water odoriferous barges glide furtively past or become stuck and have to be laboriously pushed, pulled and shoved off. The smells are so aggressive as often to have caused fresh-air enthusiasts to shut their bedroom windows with a disillusioned bang, realising at last that there were limits to the blessedness of their cult.

I stood back, praying he would get the proper impression this time.

But the bargees were evidently in league with the elements to cast a glamour on the poet by my side. Moored at our feet was a vessel piled high like a mountain peak with tin waste, silver, shining bits of metal of all shapes and sizes refracted moonbeams from different angles and my companion brooded on it long.

Of course it was nice to be able to offer food for worship to an artistic soul, but I fear the evening must be written down as a complete failure from any other point of view.

The path leaves the delectable old houses on the

left and turns into a narrow cinder track on the far side of the canal and curves round the bend of a solid old brick wall much too high to see over. This wall always reminds me of an illustration in *Pilgrim's Progress* of the two men with uncomplimentary names who, having found a convenient short cut, climbed and slithered, most efficiently and creditably, so it always seemed to me, over a wall into the pilgrim's highway to Zion. Once past this wall the path runs along the canal banks. Sometimes one is lucky and finds a great derelict barge which has been set ablaze to get its crumbling bulk out of the way. Lovely colours are seen in the flames, for the wood is well impregnated with salt water and it is damp enough to burn slowly—perhaps the illumination will last over a week-end, making Saturday, which is children's day by the canal, more exciting than ever. There are steep mud banks down which bits of corrugated iron shoot swiftly, each carrying several passengers. Opposite the mud banks seven great gasometers stand, rise and subside, from day to day after their manner, confounding the short-sighted visitor in the sitting-room at Kingsley Hall. One breakfast-time a guest sat gazing out of the window over the intervening space towards the horizon. She looked seriously disturbed.

“What's the matter?” we inquired.

“Where's the hill gone?” she asked.

“What hill?” we demanded.

“The one I've seen in the distance each morning till to-day.”

On and on the path goes with acres of land hitherto used for allotments on the left, until it reaches the great sewer walk on its long stretch from Stratford to Plaistow. Here there are not too many smells, although occasionally one passes vent-holes; but there is always a wide and satisfying skyscape to compensate. On no other walks in Bow can one get so spacious a view.

Mr. Gandhi used to watch out for specified points during this walk, where greetings were always exchanged; a set of girls working in the upstairs room of a little house which backs on to the sewer would crowd to the window to wave; Kemball and Bishop's men would gaze out at him from their night work as he passed, and the navvies dredging the mud would shout their greeting.

You cannot go for an hour's walk every morning for three months, accompanied by whoever desires to join himself to your party, without touching on a great variety of subjects for conversation. Walkers came from very different motives: some from curiosity, some to try to gain Mr. Gandhi's adherence to their own pet scheme or theory, some to acquire knowledge of facts relevant to the present situation, some to impart information.

Once a message was delivered during the walk from a little group of working men in the Midlands. They sent him their greeting and asked for a message in return. "Tell them I wish them to be careful above all things that they never lend themselves to the exploitation of others." A supplementary question followed, which he answered: "Great Britain

will have to lower her standard of living if she gives up India. It is artificially high at present due to the exploitation of backward races in the past; but though her standard of living may go down, she will nevertheless be building up all the time an honourable commerce. Hitherto no Empire has been built up on a moral basis."

"Which section of the public here would you say is most sympathetic towards India's desire for independence?" he was asked.

"It is hard to say," he answered after a pause, "but I should think the Christian section; though they don't understand all that independence implies nor do they see how it would work out."

Someone said: "Don't you think perhaps the working class is the most sympathetic?"

It was one of the visitors who replied: "I think they would naturally range themselves against the exploitation of subject races, because in a way they are a subject race themselves; but this would be only a sentimental action on their part, and as soon as they found that they would suffer as a result of giving India independence, they would no longer be eager for it. They are like most other people, when the shoe pinches they discard it."

I stepped in clumsily to defend working people from this charge and announced my belief in their essential fairness and ability for self-sacrifice.

"Oh no," said a British vegetarian, "our people of the West are all materialist. They will do nothing for India."

Some of us rose up in arms at once and an

argument ensued. Mr. Gandhi calmed us down. "There is a oneness running through all the faiths. It is clearly perceivable. They are like so many fingers on one hand. There is a difference in ritual, in garb, in words and customs; but if I tear down these unessential things I find that at rock bottom there is one faith. And that is simple. One day we shall forget all these differences, or, if they remain, they will be delightful things like different colours which give a pleasant variety to life. We shall become mutually tolerant and sensibly respectful to each other's faiths and nations. We are even perceiving the necessity of tolerating folly. You hear a lot about Hindu-Moslem strife and jealousy, but you do not realise that these quarrels are mostly engineered. It is easy for leaders to set their people against each other, but actually among the people themselves there is real harmony when left to themselves, they live at peace. Hindus are invited to Moslem festivals and go as honoured guests; they are glad to do good turns to each other. There is a deep-rooted inherent goodness in humanity, otherwise it would have perished long ago."

Someone asked: "Mr. Gandhi, if sorrow makes for character, doesn't it prove that nations need war?"

"I think that is a false doctrine," he answered. "Sorrow and suffering make for character if they are voluntarily borne, but not if they are imposed. Now the result of a non-violent war would be indeed brilliant for all concerned, but in wars experienced in the past it is very clear that they lead soon and inevitably to grossness and cruelty."

“Do you think nothing can prevent another war?” came the question.

Half-laughingly but quite sincerely he answered, “I think the success of my experiment 1906-1931 can. You may say that I am living in a fool’s paradise. Perhaps I am. There may be some flaw in it but I cannot see one.”

CHAPTER VII

DOWN OUR STREET

Bow, E.3, London, is probably known to most people merely as an unsalubrious neighbourhood, where soap factories emit vile odours which permeate the compartments of express trains that have to pass that way, however forethoughtful are the travellers in shutting the windows tight as soon as they leave the previous station.

Those who have never cared to face its violent conglomeration of scents—even the fact that Yardley's lavender water is manufactured there does not seem to reassure people—are missing a good deal that is beautiful and strong and fine in human relationships and human effort.

This chapter is devoted to the description of one street in Bow and the people who dwell there; Eagling Road, it is called, and at one end of it stands the Children's House.

The Children's House was opened by Mr. H. G. Wells in 1923. Every nook and cranny of it was planned out with a view to the personality of its future occupants. The architect and my sister Doris collaborated with the boys and girls of the neighbourhood in thinking out "what sort of a

place children ought to have if they're to grow up strong, happy and good."

For years previously they had had a slogan: "The best is not too good for the children of Poplar." This was axiomatic. They knew that their Nursery School* was ill-housed; that the children got little sun; that the shed erected in a back-yard of one of a row of dirty little houses in a mean street was altogether inadequate. They had gone in for what we call Direct Action, that is, taking their courage in both hands and trying to forget that there was anything peculiar in what they were doing, they had called on any local people who lived in houses that had gardens and put the needs of the children before them, quite blatantly; they then announced their slogan and suggested that the garden should in future be used for their school.

At last, by dint of allowing constant refusals neither to diminish their ardour nor to extinguish their vision, they sufficiently impressed a retired business man of eighty-eight for him to say: "Go ahead. Find the site. Build what you need. I'll pay."

Then came transformation. Four wretched, condemned, rat-ridden houses were pulled down—a child of four ceremoniously knocked out the first brick—the ground was cleared, offered to God, delved into; all sorts of nice notables came to lay foundation stones and soon the street was no longer merely an ugly, double row of apologetic-looking houses where children sat on the kerbstones making

* Founded in 1912.

pies compact of mud and germs, or sprawled on the path while their elder brothers squatted on the pavement and played cards for farthings. It took on a completely new air of self-respect. At one of its corners swung a gaily-painted signboard. Over its door benign figures from a coloured earthenware plaque gazed out on the inhabitants of the street.

Soon a double row of plane trees suggested a new name for it, Eagling Avenue. Henceforth the boys' and girls' chief excitement was to watch the comings and goings and happenings at the Children's House.

One day I found a powerful limousine outside the door. The tall, kindly-faced chauffeur stood entertaining benevolently six of our smallest neighbours, who were seated in a row along the footboard, gazing up at him with tremendous admiration and absorption. The car's owner came out at the moment, and by the expression on his face I rather gathered that he agreed with me that even Mr. John Galsworthy's car was not too good for the children of Poplar.

Someone broadcast the news from the B.B.C. headquarters that the houses in this street suffered from an over-population of rats. Forthwith the Borough Council inspected drains and found a new sewer was necessary. Up came the road, a fourteen-foot deep trench was dug. Ratcatchers were brought to kill the vermin; great, bloated creatures came scurrying out of their holes, diseased and virulent. The dogs had to be held off them or they would have been poisoned.

The new sewer improved matters considerably,

but many of the houses remained unhealthy. They back on to the shops in Devon's Road. Behind the butcher's shop stands a shed for bones and "bits"; naturally this is very attractive to rats; also in summer the bluebottles that feast there regularly invade the rows of houses adjacent.

Two or three families live in each of these little houses. In several cases whole families live in a single room. One of the troubles about over-crowding is that furniture has to be overcrowded too. A mother, father, and five boys and girls cannot live together in a small space without drawers, boxes and cupboards, and when the supply of these fails, piles of clothes, books and papers have to stand on the floor. It has been said that the overcrowding of inanimate objects is almost as deleterious to human nerves as the overcrowding of people. In this super-civilised State every grown-up person has to own papers, forms and unemployment cards; there are generally Hospital Savings Association vouchers, burial insurance and trade union tickets also, as well as the sheaf of official papers that pour in upon one from local organisations, School Attendance Officers and Care Committees.

Actually, even if a family has a communal comb and a communal toothbrush, and if a sponge, flannel or towel has "to do" for the whole household, it becomes a matter of some urgency to discover where to stow all the wherewithal of life; things are stuffed behind the mantelpiece mirror or impounded on nails in the wall. Queer little rivalries and

unexpected property rights are discoverable in this herding together of personalities into a single room. There is no family activity that has not to be accommodated in that room; it must serve for the performance of every human function: eating, drinking, sleeping, studying, courting, washing, mating, bringing to birth and dying. In such a home once for the first time it dawned upon a boy of twelve that he was a separate and distinct personality from his brothers and sisters and had possessions. There were three rusty old nails stuck into the wall. He had flung his tie and collar and little odds and ends anywhere up till that day. Then suddenly he had become aware of a masterful, irresistible need, he found the uses of proclamation. With the stump of an old pencil he scrawled in letters that shouted with pride: "Bobby's nail." It was an awkward receptacle for all the personal paraphernalia of a suddenly awakened human soul, but the best available. He caught hold of me and dragged me to this corner behind the door, this precious, holy corner that he had appropriated to himself. He was the adored eldest, and all the little brothers and sisters came surging across the room, too, in our wake. They knew something very exciting was happening to Bobby though they couldn't quite understand the new look in his face. The nail didn't seem very thrilling to them, but that didn't matter. Who were they to understand their hero's secret raptures? They all kept chanting the new and mystic words: "Bobby's nail, Bobby's nail."

Down our street the father of a big family living

in a single room was in great trouble one day. One of the children had just been buried and another had died five weeks previously. He could get no work and the Relieving Officer had warned him that his parish money would probably soon have to be cut off. Nothing but the workhouse confronted him.

“I shan’t go, Miss,” he said. “I couldn’t let the missus and the kids face that—me in one part of it and mother in another, the little ‘uns in that ‘ome they keep for them and the boys and girls in different ‘ouses at the Shenfield schools. I can’t, Miss.”

He seemed to think I wanted him to, and I took some trouble in assuring him that I also thought it would be calamitous.

“Yes, Miss,” he said. “I ‘ave thought it all out. If they cut off my relief, they cut it off, that’s all. There won’t be no money for food, but I am not going to see them starve.” He was an habitually quiet sort of man who seemed under an unusual compulsion to reveal himself that day. “I shall walk into a shop,” he said, in tones almost of awe—many hours had evidently gone to the making of this decision—“and I shall take a loaf. While I’m in quod they’ll look after the missus and the kids at ‘ome; that’s better than the ‘ouse.”

I told him I hoped it would not come to that, but if it did, he must be sure to do it all very openly—for secrecy and deceit and furtiveness were the worst parts of thieving. I asked him to let me be his witness and I would speak for him at the police

court. I had never had any conversation with this man before. He did not know me at all and I think he had imagined I'd be shocked. Alas! Christians have an unsavoury reputation for being easily shocked, so when I made my practical suggestion it seemed to break him down; he was in such a weak, half-starved state that it was too much for him. Tears rolled down his cheeks.

But there is not only tragedy hidden away behind the modest doors and windows of this street.

A tall, soldierly-looking man lives on the unhealthy bluebottle-visited side of the road. His children have had more than their share of illness, but he keeps himself perennially erect, cheery, neat and self-respecting, even when his Sunday suit is in pawn and he cannot attend his beloved Hall. He once had a wonderful stroke of luck. For years he had been going in for a competition of some sort in a Sunday paper, then suddenly a twenty-pounds prize came into that little home. It was lovely to watch them spend it. I am not a too provident person myself, but I urged on them that I hoped they'd seize this opportunity to get the mother the set of teeth that were so urgently needed, take the whole family for a holiday, and so on.

But no, it simply could not be done. There were countless other street-dwellers who had not had such an outstanding piece of good fortune. They all needed something. The young cripple opposite should have a new pair of boots. Five shillings would come in nicely for the very old lady down the street. A ten-shilling note was sent along for Kingsley Hall.

The whole family was rigged out in boots and other necessities, certainly, but a large proportion of the money was spent with sheer joy, just in giving presents, most sensible presents, of course, not table-centres, bath salts, bridge scorers or any of the host of fancy goods about which people rack their brains at Christmas, but good, solid, joy-bringing gifts.

There is romance down our street, and sheer, rollicking Falstaffian humour, and rows, and unlicensed money-lending, practised by those who make a living out of the misfortunes of others. And how can one keep out of the clutches of these ghouls if a sudden misfortune arises? Any illness that is bad enough to call in a doctor constitutes a terrifying crisis in a home near the poverty line. If the doctor says: "Give nourishments," then "nourishments" you must give, and one's money doesn't run to "nourishments." The word means milk that isn't condensed. It means new-laid eggs. It means soda-water, butter, fruit. But it must be managed. And when illness comes the doctor must be paid, and he costs five shillings a visit sometimes. Ready cash must come from somewhere, and none of your neighbours has any ready cash for you. A pain keeps clutching at your heart whenever you see the face of the ill child or the husband in pain. Six hundred per cent. per annum is the rate of interest charged, but this is not mentioned in so many words. "Only twopence in the shilling, my dear, and pay me every Saturday."

This street Mr. Gandhi chose to explore early one morning in November. His movements always

created excitement. A large crowd was very soon accompanying us as we crossed Bruce Road and made our way to Eagling Road. In and out of the houses he went, on both sides of the street. The women were inordinately proud. They had had no idea he was coming; some were at their ironing, some cleaning, but all were ready to display every corner of their little domain for him to inspect, to ask about and to admire. He wanted to know what work the men round about did, the rent of the houses, the work of the sanitary authorities so far as drains and cleanliness were concerned, what provision was made for the care of the family during unemployment. Upstairs they took him and out into the backyards. They showed him their pets, their rabbits and their chickens; occasionally there was a piano to be proud of, and always it was obvious how the best was being made of everything and how anything that possessed any sort of beauty was cherished.

Mr. Gandhi enjoyed that morning more than any other spent in London, and those whose homes he visited will hold it always memorable.

CHAPTER VIII

THE NOTABLES ARRIVE

THE Kingsley Hall visitors' book presents during the autumn of 1931 a sudden efflorescence in its signatures. Throughout that period the telephone bell rang continuously. Breakfast became a public function. At 1 a.m. the operator would drag us from our beds to take messages from New York.

A miner from Durham was in our household at that time and we assigned to him the job of doorkeeper. He was ensconced in the lobby and had to welcome or discourage countless callers. He had to answer questions, keep his temper and simulate the rock for firmness. He had to enlighten people as to what Kingsley Hall was, sell and give away our literature and see to it that, though due consideration was given to each of Mr. Gandhi's visitors, yet nothing should stand in the way of the activities of the hundreds of ordinary Bow people who are in and out of the place throughout the week. Most of the time he managed his arduous duties with admirable equanimity, but occasionally the atmosphere would become electric.

It was a little over-stimulating perhaps for some of us Bow folk to have such a continual succession

of visitors to entertain, and the family life of the folk living down our street became entirely disintegrated for the first week at least of Mr. Gandhi's stay. The street runs from south to north and the line of cells opening on to the flat roof runs from east to west, so, as the wall of the roof is low, a good view was afforded to all Powis Road dwellers. They still talk of it, their eyes gleaming with excitement.

"I never got on with my housework at all—I couldn't—I kept running in and out all the time to get a glimpse of him. The children were on the watch, too, all the time; they cheered whenever 'e came out of his cell. There wasn't much Sunday dinner eaten that day down our street. ' 'Ere 'e is,' someone 'd shout and out we'd all run. Mrs. Brown over the way forgot to cook the greens and taters—and Mrs. Miller dished them up and forgot the beef. And such a nice gentleman as 'e wos too, not a bit like wot the papers said. You could tell 'e was good all through and understood poor people. 'E wos just like one of us."

Unemployed workmen often give their services to us in answering the telephone bell, but now it became rather an exciting and coveted job. It might be young Mr. Randolph Churchill fixing up an interview with Mr. Gandhi, or Mr. Charlie Chaplin's friend arranging a meeting of the two great men. A call might come from Scotland Yard, from St. James's Palace or from 10, Downing Street. One of the men of our household had to put up a truckle bed in his room for a C.I.D. officer, and my office was almost as often as not turned into a bedroom

for people from all over the country and from abroad who wanted the privilege of going for the hour's walk at half-past five in the morning.

We expected George Russell (A.E.) as an occupant of one of the cells on our roof; unfortunately, illness at home prevented him, but we had our minds widened by a great number of other guests.

Half-past six in the morning seems a curious time to begin entertaining people, but after the stimulus of their hour with Mr. Gandhi they were generally glad of tea and a talk, and by this means we became cognisant of all sorts and shades of opinion, acquired inside information about many movements and formed new friendships which are of abiding richness.

Often our guests would stay on, lend a hand with the housework, come to our fifteen minutes' silent prayer and then take breakfast with us. The whole long tableful of people would listen to Clare Sheridan telling of her family and their life in an oasis in North Africa, to the Swedish missionary's stories, to the new way of treating the feeble-minded that a young German anthroposophist and his friend were working out near Birmingham. Leaders of the unemployed in Wales, University Professors, old settlers from Tolstoi farm in South Africa, Temperance leaders, Americans, French and Swiss, all of them seemed to fit into our family life and to leave regretfully. This pleasant impression may have been a result of our willingness to be deceived by mere politeness on their part, but we prefer to cherish it.

Perhaps the visitor who endeared himself most

was Brigadier-General Crozier. I was away when he came, but afterwards the household described to me his visit in the terms of praise which they reserve for only a few. "He was good fun. He fitted in to the place beautifully. We didn't have to put on our best behaviour."

During the first three weeks certain of Mr. Gandhi's friends kept arriving, looking very purposeful, and proceeded to propound weighty reasons why he should leave Bow forthwith and move to a more civilised part of London. Said one: "It's impossible, Miss Lester, for you to keep him here. Of course you recognise that fact. It's very nice, of course, but we can't pay two pounds for a taxi every time we want to see him. You agree, don't you?"

"It's for Mr. Gandhi to decide," I would answer non-committally, though I knew the speaker could have twenty cars if she needed them.

Meanwhile my guest would continue his spinning, listen to the results of their latest painstaking search for alternative accommodation and content himself always with one dispassionate remark. "If I must leave here, I will only go to some other place where I can be among the same sort of people, among the poor."

Sir Charles Trevelyan, so soon as he heard of his need, drove down to Kingsley Hall to offer him his house, but that suggestion also proved to be impracticable.

Then Mary Hughes came to see him. She is the veteran of Whitechapel, daughter of Judge

Hughes, author of *Tom Brown's Schooldays*. When we first asked her to come, she said she wouldn't. Why should she take up the time of such a man? What need was there for her to speak to him, to hear him or to see him in the flesh, when for so many years he had been continually in her prayers? We had to explain to her that our guest wanted to see her and she must come. He had heard so much about the fight she had put up forty-five years ago for the wretched inmates of the workhouse in those days. She had wrung concessions for them from unwilling hands, she had never stopped fighting. She was still in the same spot to-day, living in a little converted public-house, reserving for herself only one tiny, eight by ten foot room for her living-room, work-room and office. She spent scarcely a penny on herself. "Aren't you cold this bitter weather with no fire here?" I would ask. With characteristic energy she would stretch her warm hand out and clasp mine.

"Feel me," she would say. "How can I be cold when I am always burning with indignation at the sufferings of the poor?"

We took her up to Mr. Gandhi's cell early one morning. He rose up to greet her. There they stood looking at each other level-eyed, clasping hands, with smiling recognition and understanding.

"What's this I hear?" she said, "that there's talk of your going? But that is nonsense. This place is made for you. Don't you see that? It fits you exactly and you suit it. You grew here. It's Kingsley's Hall. Kingsley Lester was a young man

full of life, who has never died because his spirit lives on in this place. You can't go, brother."

As she was delivering these sentences, the Brahmin Secretary and Devadas Gandhi stood outside the cell door, attracted by her clear voice, gazing through the window at the two kindred spirits, listening with delight and something of awe in their faces.

Though district after district was canvassed for another home nearer to St. James's and house after house considered, in each new suggestion Mr. Gandhi showed less interest than in the last. Eventually he announced: "Whatever anyone says, nothing will induce me to tear myself away from this neighbourhood. This is real Round Table Conference work. I am getting at the heart of the people of England here."

On the first day there had appeared among his visitors a specially attractive-looking old man. His face reminded one of Tagore, but his beard was whiter and he wore a turban of fine woven white cambric. Mr. Gandhi introduced him to me as Sir Prabashanka Pattani, an administrator of a very large district and a Prime Minister of one of the Indian states. He was a great lover of children and he wanted to know if I could put him up at Kingsley Hall too. He had come to the conclusion that Mr. Gandhi was right in staying in East London and he wanted to do the same thing. If there were no room in Kingsley Hall, could I suggest accommodation near by? He was not difficult to please; a bathroom with hot water and cleanliness was all

he needed. Of course a bathroom was exactly the thing with which Bow could not supply him, and as we were already so overcrowded at Kingsley Hall that two of us were sleeping throughout the whole of the autumn in what was virtually a passage, most regretfully I had to refuse yet another delightful guest for the East End.

But Sir Putney—for thus he facilitated for us the pronunciation of his name—came out to see us a good deal. He really loved our people, and at Kingsley Hall parties and at prayers his face and figure became familiar.

Then came the Pearly King. This was a tremendous thrill for Bow people, who are proud of their costermonger royalties. He did indeed cut a fine and noble figure, this king. He held himself well with an erect and animated bearing, intelligent face and easy, gracious, dignified manner. The material of which his suit was made was almost invisible, so thickly was it incrusted with pearl buttons. His son and daughter accompanied him to the Hall, dressed in the same fashion. It was incumbent upon them to pay their respects to such a distinguished visitor in their domain. They came with a gift, a large crate of seedless oranges, and Mr. Gandhi hastened down from the roof when he heard of their arrival in order deferentially to greet this royal highness.

Mr. H. N. Brailsford often came to see Mr. Gandhi; his wife, who was Miss Clare Leighton, the maker of the woodcuts which illustrate “The Bridge of San Luis Rey,” made a portrait of him.

Miss Evelyn Underhill wrote saying she wanted to meet him, humbly adding to her request the words, "Though I know I have no claim upon his time."

"But she has a claim upon my time. Please tell her so," he answered at once. "I read her poems in gaol. I enjoyed them greatly." So that interview was arranged also.

Krishna Murti paid a long visit. It was interesting to see him. I had heard of him twenty-two years previously when as a boy Mrs. Annie Besant was training him to occupy a tremendous position in the world. I had watched his public entry upon Messiahship, heard of the worship accorded him, and met some of the hierarchy appointed to serve him. One morning the newspapers announced that he repudiated his title and all that was connected with it. Admiration for him suddenly began to flare up in my heart.

Major Yeats-Brown, the author of the *Bengal Lancer*, was a highly-appreciated guest.

We were sorry that Bernard Shaw paid his visit to him in Knightsbridge rather than in Bow, as we have longed to meet him for many years.

A special title was reserved for our Rector, Rev. H. Greatbach. He came by appointment at a quarter-past eight one morning to bring a greeting and blessing from the Diocesan Association of East London.

"I tell you," Mr. Gandhi said to me afterwards, "he was in and out again in three minutes, but he said all he had to say, just that and no more, and

all in such a straightforward, fine, quiet way. I admire him greatly. He is the Prince of Visitors."

One evening there appeared a burly farmer from Gloucestershire, the owner of the herd of goats that supplied the milk. He had travelled south to attend the Dairy Show at the Agricultural Hall, and he called on Mr. Gandhi to tell him that it was his duty to come and witness the noble animals that had given him sustenance. This was clearly reasonable, and a very pleasant hour was spent at the Show which provided rich material for journalists.

The milk-boy, errand boys, and many others used to deposit their autograph books with us for signature. This was referred to in a letter from a lady of the Intelligentsia which arrived one day with a request that it was impossible to grant. She wanted us to procure a whole paragraph in Mr. Gandhi's handwriting. "I am sure you can get him to do this," she added, "as I hear that he gives his autograph even to the milk-boy." It was my job to write back and explain to her that somehow she had got the emphasis wrong. Even to the milk-boy indeed! He is the son of one of our oldest families here, a faithful, delightful and cheery soul with brains, a clear whistle and a fine spirit. Who more worthy than a milk-boy?

One of my clearest mental pictures is of Mr. Gandhi sitting with a telegram in his hand looking distinctly puzzled and a little amused at his own bewilderment. Grouped round him were secretaries awaiting his answer. As I came in, the silence was being broken by a deprecatory voice: "But

he's only a buffoon, there is no point in going to meet him." The telegram was being handed over for the necessary refusal when I saw the name.

"But don't you know that name, Bapu?" I inquired, immensely intrigued.

"No," he answered, taking back the flimsy form and looking at me for the enlightenment that his secretaries could not give.

"Charlie Chaplin! He's the world's hero. You simply must meet him. His art is rooted in the life of working people, he understands the poor as well as you do, he honours them always in his pictures."

So the following week, further East even than Bow, in Dr. Katial's house in a back street in Canning Town, the inhabitants were given the double thrill of welcoming both men. We were all under a vow to keep silent about the event, but somehow the news leaked out and the streets were glutted with a solid mass of happy people, standing delightedly laughing with each other, laughing with the police, laughing with Mr. Chaplin as he leapt out of the car, raised his hat to them all and fervently shook hands with himself and eventually laughing with Mr. Gandhi, who seemed to complete their joy.

Inside, the two little men sat on a couch, rather apart from the rest of us, and talked about the people, the toilers, the underfed, the machine slaves and the imprisoned.

"The worst thing I ever had to do," said Mr. Chaplin at one point, "was when I talked with the men for an hour in Sing Sing gaol. I couldn't

do it again. One thought coloured all I said: 'There but for the grace of God stands Charles Chaplin.' "

Then suddenly a horribly vulgar invasion occurred. Into the tiny front room, contrary to all instructions, burst a wholly uncontrollable gang of press photographers. They had broken down the back wall and got in somehow. No words from our host seemed potent enough to dislodge them and Mr. Gandhi had to be subjected against his will to a row of cameras.

When the disgusting tumult had abated and the room was private once more it was nearing seven o'clock, so we all had prayers together.

CHAPTER IX

THE GOOD COMPANIONS

I WAS disappointed in most of the meetings I heard Mr. Gandhi address in London. People clamoured for tickets for weeks after they were all sold ; long distances were travelled and all sorts of complicated adjustments made to enable individuals to gratify their passionate desire to see him and hear his message. Then when the night came, it seemed that they never met the real man ; somewhere there was constraint, formality, an unlooked-for sense of strain ; they never got to know this cheery, friendly, humorous man.

Whence came this sense of awkwardness ? Was it fear on the part of the organisers of doing the wrong thing ? Or was the disconcerting strangeness to be found in him ? Surely not ! His garments are not unusual to anyone accustomed to Eastern ways, and probably every member of the audience had seen countless pictures of Bible characters in clothes looking very much the same as his. Often I used to try to bridge the chasm beforehand by telling him on the early morning walk the sort of people he would be facing in the evening, describing individuals known to me personally, letting him

know something of their inner lives or giving him the back history of the organisation that was calling together the meeting.

“Now to-night you can let yourself go to your heart’s content,” I would say. “The people you’ll meet are ready for anything. They’ll understand your full message. They have wide experience and a humble spirit.”

And then I waited and watched; hoping they’d get *en rapport*, the audience and he, but they didn’t. It seemed a pity, for he could have learnt as much from them as they from him, especially as he always asked people to question him.

He would begin to talk in his low, quiet voice, deliberate, objective and exact in every statement, as befits the worshipper of truth, with no shred of passion, piety or sentiment; during the whole two hours no oratory, no use of voice inflexions, no movement, no gesture, none of the usual concomitants of enthusiasm and persuasiveness.

When it was time to go he would get up and leave with an economy of movement and utterance rather strange to organisers of meetings. But it is second nature, I suppose, to one whose lightest word is quoted and acted upon, who never gives himself times of relaxation, simply because he is never strained nor tense nor over-stimulated; whose spirit is imperturbable and serene, whether he is on the heights of prayer, in the ordinary round of everyday life, sitting by the kitchen fire of a workman’s two-roomed home or in the confines of a prison. It was suggested to him once that the real value of his

visit to England did not lie in the attempt to find a solution to the Indian problem, but in showing us Europeans how to eliminate our tendency to nervous breakdowns.

It became almost a preoccupation with me how to get middle-class people to know him, really to know him. I began to realise that the natural thing for us to do with people we admire and are proud of is to chaff them, to "pull their leg," to raise cheers or to tell humorous stories about them and thus express our real feelings invertedly. Our custom with an honoured guest is to give him a dinner, or even a cup of tea, but Mr. Gandhi eats alone and does not drink tea. What other way is open to us? To take the dust from the feet is an Indian's expression of affection and respect, but that attitude would never suit us, and Mr. Gandhi tries to stop even his own people from this obeisance. Indian people, through contact with Europeans in India, where their behaviour is completely different from what it is at home, have come to think that all of us in the West are confirmedly ceremonious, slaves to etiquette. With their innate courtesy they are eager not to upset us or disturb us by contravening any of the thousand and one taboos which seem to them to operate in our social intercourse. So they wait, quietly, patiently and with dignity, ready to take their cue from us in the performance of any little rite or ceremony we initiate. They do not wish to embarrass us by appearing unaware of our predilections in this matter of etiquette.

So East and West face each other, waiting; a

state of suspended animation sets in, and the destined moment is wasted. It seems a pity. For here were the Bow people, seeing him daily, feeling thoroughly at home with him all the time. Men in the street would shout their greeting after him, and if he failed to hear it as he passed, "Good morning" would be bawled after him in an ever-increasing volume of sound. He always enjoyed the swift repartee of Cockney wit. He was never at a loss for a reply in the same vein.

A night-watchman's outlook on the world is different from that of other people. From his tarpaulin-covered shelter he looks out on slow sunsets and sunrises; from Saturday noon till Monday morning, detached from the world, the brazier of coke in front of him not only keeps his shelter warm but is a living, beautiful thing, a bowlful of glowing red that makes a quivering in the air above it, through which passers-by look different. You get a new view of things if you partake of his hospitality; the board well padded with sacks stretched across from box to box proves none too hard a seat; his whole *ménage* is within reach—all the wherewithal for tea and nice hunks of home-made cake, everything kept severely separate from the saucepans, frying-pans, cups and towels belonging to the navvy gang whose equipment he is there to guard.

Our night-watchman had something to say to Bapu in the cold dawn. They understood each other at once, and as they talked, six little red hands were spread out round the fire, for it was a cold

morning and three children from the Children's House had induced their mother to let them "go out for a walk with Mr. Gandhi."

A neighbour crippled with rheumatism sent a message by way of his wife to Mr. Gandhi that he couldn't leave his home but wanted very much to see him. Next morning at 8 a.m. we were all four sitting round his kitchen fire exchanging experiences.

A blind man wrote to him from the local hospital, and the whole ward was spruced up at 6 a.m. the next day to entertain the honoured guest.

One of the neighbouring workmen was asked to speak at a public meeting recently about our notable guest, and thus he described him. "A skinny little bloke with a funny face—that's how the papers had shown him to us. But he wasn't that sort of chap at all. The day he arrived I'm sure there were a thousand people at Kingsley Hall to meet him, and when we saw him for ourselves we found he was a fine chap, laughing and jolly, nothing out of the way at all. I took a lot of notice of him because I live just opposite. I watched all his ways. I reckon he was a man you must admire. He was so strong-minded; every morning up and out by half-past-five. Think of it! and when you needn't do it, too. When you're working on an early shift don't you often think to yourself, 'Ah! This is good, a lovely day, air clean, sky grand. I'll keep this up and get up early next week, when I'm working late shift.' But when the day comes we turn over to go to sleep again—not strong-minded enough, we aren't. But

that man never once missed ; he had made up his mind to do it, so he did it. That's a great thing, isn't it? Then look at his prayers. I'm not religious myself, but I think it was grand the way that man got up at three o'clock every morning and never missed. And mind you, he often didn't get home until one or two. I could always hear him arrive—just opposite my house. Well, I don't know how you feel. He's in prison now. He's sticking out for what he thinks right. All I can say is, 'Good luck to him!' I hope he gets it."

When one of the Kingsley Hall household has a birthday, all the others contribute sixpence. Our evening meal is curtailed of its egg or fish or fruit, and our best shopper is detailed to "lay out" the five shillings. Then at ten-fifteen, when the work of the day is over, we enter a transformed sitting-room, decorated, candle-lit, with a wonderful supper spread out awaiting us, and the home-made entertainment goes on till midnight.

Sixpences were given willingly for Mr. Gandhi's birthday party. He was adjured to come back that night early from the Knightsbridge office. Carpets were brought up, each person's squatting place was marked out on the floor by a sketch symbolising his work. The menu was pure enough for the most fastidious Brahmin, though our own particular one, Mahadev Desai, was never fussy and appreciated everything that Bow offered him.

We made merry together.

As the Round Table Conference work increased in

difficulty, however, most of his leisure time disappeared. He had hoped to go to the Old Vic, to old Jordans village, to the miners in South Wales, to Ireland and to Germany, but none of these pleasant plans materialised.

Whenever he got home from his Knightsbridge office before ten-fifteen he would come into one or other of the clubs on his way up to the roof.

On Saturday nights Kingsley Hall is the great rival to the thirty-three public-houses situated within a three-minutes walk. Married men and women crowd in, pay their threepence and make merry with their friends. With meticulous regard for detail they work out each week's programme on the previous Thursday evening. They arrange games, dancing of the romping, cheery, old-fashioned sort, competitions, races, playlets, skits. "Joy Nights" have become quite a feature in the neighbourhood. The evening ends with all the people standing in a huge circle round the hall, arms crossed, hands clasped, singing "Auld Lang Syne," repeating the chorus in rollicking mood, dancing forward to the centre and retreating three or four times. The very spirit of comradeship is then concentrated into prayer, spoken or silent. Only after that half-minute does the circle break up and the members go home.

This was a function Mr. Gandhi attended whenever possible. The first evening he was in Bow was Saturday, so just as the noise and the friendliness were at their height, pervading every corner of the place in a degree even more marked than usual, the

oak door behind the piano opened and five khaddar-clothed figures entered. The hundred guests with their characteristic sense of courtesy went on with their games, for they were all conscious that Mr. Gandhi was to be accepted as one of themselves during his stay and not to be uncomfortably isolated by attention. Delightedly he watched the animated scene, and it was a beautiful thing to look at; young fathers and mothers with their first child, older parents whose young energetically capered about the floor space between dances, older men and women sitting back enjoying the luxury of doing nothing but watch, and an occasional proud grandparent to complete the picture. One seemed to see it all anew through our guest's eyes. There came to me Kingsley Hall's first motto:

“ The stranger
Shall see in the stranger his brother at last
And his sister in eyes that were strange.”

After a while I said, “ Come and speak to our blind friend,” and led the way across the hall for him to shake hands with the only one there who could not see him. As he followed me, the music died down, the romping ceased, the programme suddenly collapsed. They couldn't help themselves, they wanted so much to watch him.

Suddenly one seemed to be witnessing a scene from the Gospels. As he talked to the blind woman, the rest drew near; very gently, very quietly they approached; mostly it was the young mothers and fathers who came closest to him; all unselfconscious

they were, and as they pressed forward they held their babies out for him to touch. He greeted them all and took one child in his arms. There was a look of wonder and a feeling of deepest peace and utter satisfaction in the whole hall that night.

CHAPTER X

MR. GANDHI AND THE CHILDREN *

“ I SEE'D Mr. Gandhi. I see'd him on the roof. He waved to us ! ” So announces Master Johnnie, to be joined by a chorus of eager, “ I see'd him too, I did.”

Soon the children are divided into two camps—those who have seen Mr. Gandhi and those who haven't, and everyone in the second is doing his best to achieve distinction by joining the first.

Boys and girls rush back from school and stand with necks craned gazing up at the Kingsley Hall roof, where they know Mr. Gandhi's cell is. Great is their delight when in converse on the roof one or two members of the Round Table Conference or other Indian friends stroll to the edge and look over the parapet to the little crowd below. But their triumph is complete when their chief guest looks over, and waves a friendly hand to them.

One never-to-be-forgotten day they were invited into the Hall, quite informally, to meet Mr. Gandhi. He squatted in friendly fashion on the oak floor and the boys and girls clustered round, big sisters pushing

* This chapter is contributed by Doris Lester of the Children's House, Bow.

little brothers to the fore, and big brothers holding little sisters by the hand, for very chivalrous are these youngsters of our East London streets.

All their attention was riveted on the white-clad figure with the kindly brown eyes, seated among them, and eagerly they followed his arguments. "When a boy hits you, what do you do? What happens then? Is there a better way?"

There was a spark of humour as well as a challenge in all he said. His eyes twinkled as he cross-examined in kindly fashion these jolly little urchins with their tit-for-tat philosophy.

They rose to the occasion. Their answers came quick and pat and they lost no point in his argument, and before long there was the nucleus of a young Peace Army with glowing eyes clustered round him. The repercussions of that talk may go far.*

Even the tinies claimed him as their friend. Young Peter, aged three and a half, was strutting up and down his kitchen chanting in a deep sing-song, "Ole Gandhi, Ole Gandhi." His mother stopped him. "No, Peter, we don't say 'Ole Gandhi.' Mr. Gandhi is a very kind gentleman. We say Mr. Gandhi."

* The father of June, aged four, one of the children who attended this play-hour of Mr. Gandhi, said to him next week, "I've a bone to pick with you, Mr. Gandhi."

"How's that?" he inquired with the sudden quickening of interest and delight he always manifested if criticism or humour were observable.

"My small daughter came to my bed early this morning, hit me hard over the head, stared at me interestedly, lifted up her finger and said, "Now, Daddy, you mustn't hit back; Mr. Gandhi said you weren't to!"

Peter paused for a moment, dissatisfaction written large upon his countenance. "No, not Mr. Gandhi," he retorted; it didn't sound friendly enough; then his face suddenly cleared. "Uncle Gandhi," he concluded. So the kitchen rang to the revised version.

It was Peter who welcomed Uncle Gandhi when he came to visit the Nursery School a few mornings later. As the news reached the children that he was coming to see them, they ran, some of the bolder spirits, to the door to welcome him. As he approached Peter started the cry of welcome, "Uncle Gandhi," which was taken up by the others.

Proudly they showed him their cupboard and their toys. They took him to their bathroom with its miniature bath, its little low wash-basins, its thirty-six little pegs, every one with a pictured symbol above it so that Tony and Jean, who could not yet read their own names, could recognise their own pegs and possessions by the "ship" or the "bear" or the "wild rose" which was their particular sign. But most of all perhaps Uncle Gandhi enjoyed the sight of the thirty-six little toothbrushes.

"How lovely!" he cried, as he watched Brian solemnly take his brush and his mug and commence operations.

A few, one confesses, hid their faces shyly at first, for anything unusual is a little scaring to some small children; however, the shyness quickly wore off, and he was soon the centre of a happy, chattering crowd.

With regret they saw him leave them, but though a

crowd awaited him outside, he delayed setting off for a few minutes longer to allow himself the pleasure of being taken to see their L.C.C. playground. This was not according to plan; the idea emerged from some child in the crowd and was swiftly put into execution without any of us officious grown-ups knowing anything of it. They had a wonderful set of amusements to show him: giant strides, rows of swings, and super-safe see-saws have stood there for years and developed the muscles of several generations, but lately one of Mr. Lansbury's great shoots has been set up, and hour after hour the children queue up at the foot of the ladder, for it's worth waiting a long time and climbing quite high in order to get that smooth, quick, stabbing, thrilling rush through the air. Mr. Gandhi understood all this and gloried in the comradeship of the boys and girls.

• • • • •
The day after he had visited the houses down our street there was great rivalry among the boys and girls.

“ Uncle Gandhi came to my house.”

“ He went into Jerry's kitchen.”

“ He talked to Brian's mother, he did.”

“ He looked at our kitchen stove ; I see'd him.”

Yes, now that he had actually been into our homes, Uncle Gandhi was enshrined for always in our hearts.

It was his birthday the next week. In the Nursery School we always celebrate birthdays with lighted candles and sometimes a cake, and we were eager

that our new friend should not miss the joys of such celebrations.

So the day before his birthday we sat on the roof, all the three- and four-year-olds, while the two-year-olds were playing with their toys, and we talked about it. We all had plenty to say and we made up our minds to send him a letter and a birthday present.

Joan said: "Will he come here?"

David said: "Won't he come to dinner with us?"

John said: "I see'd him out of Cyril's front window."

Bernard said: "He went into Gerald's house."

Maurice said: "You know when he came into my house. Well! I showed him all my toys."

John said: "I call him Mr. Gandhi."

Peter said: "I call him *Uncle* Gandhi."

Then we all said: "Let's send him something."

Someone said: "Let's send him a doggie."

Alice said: "Our little white doggie."

We all said: "Yes, our little white doggie."

Phyllis said: "Let's send him a pair of boots." (We had seen his bare, sandalled feet and it looked rather cold.)

Alice said: "Let's send him a warm jersey and knickers."

Doreen said: "I am going to buy him a cake."

Bernard said: "I am going to buy him a little new-born baby in a cradle."

Here is the letter we sent him:

"DEAR UNCLE GANDHI,

Have a happy birthday. We all say, 'Have a happy birthday.' We are going to sing a

birthday song for you. We are going to send you a present. We'd like you to have a birthday cake with a bird and icing on it. Please will you come here and have your birthday and we'll have our Band and play songs about 'Daisy' and 'Away in a Manger' and light candles. Love from,

Maurice, Stanley, Peter, Joan, Jean, Alice, Joan, Bernard, John, Willie, Phyllis, Doreen, David, and love from all the lot of babies, and all the lot of us."

We sent him with the letter a little basket with two woolly dogs, three pink birthday candles, a tin plate, a blue pencil, and some jelly sweets.

In the Council Schools the ten-year-olds were asked to write an essay on Mr. Gandhi. The one that follows, by Willie Saville, one of our Children's House boys, found its way into the Indian Press.

"Mr. Gandhi is an Indian who was educated as a law student in London in 1890. He gave up this to help his country get better conditions.

"He has come to England for the Indian Round Table Conference to try and get back the trade for India. He has been trying to get the 'Brahmins' to let the 'Untouchables' come into their temples. There are about 6,000,000 people who do not know what a good meal is. He has given up all his belongings and is trying to be one of the poorest Indians. That is why he wears a loin-cloth.

"His food is goat's milk, fruit and vegetables. He does not eat meat or fish because he does not

believe in taking life. Gandhi is a Christian Indian. Mr. Gandhi spins his own cotton. He does an hour's spinning every day even when he was in hospital. He has just come back from Lancashire, visiting the cotton mills. He prays from Sunday 7 p.m. till Monday 7 p.m., and if you speak to him he does not answer you. When he came visiting, he came to my house and my mother was ironing, but he said, 'Don't stop, for I have had to do that myself.' I have shaken hands with him. The Indian for 'hullo' or 'good-bye' is 'Nomaska.' "

When our guest left us to return to India his only concern over the baggage was that the toys should be safe. More valuable gifts he had had, and generally, according to his custom, had given them away forthwith, but the children's toys belonged to him inalienably. A few weeks after his imprisonment we received the following letter. It will be treasured by us always.

" DEAR LITTLE FRIENDS,

I often think of you and the bright answers you gave to my questions when, that afternoon, we sat together.

I never got the time whilst I was at Kingsley Hall to send you a note thanking you for the gifts of love you had sent me. That I do now from my prison.

I had hoped to transfer those gifts to the Ashram children. But I was never able to reach the Ashram.

Is it not funny that you should receive a letter

from a prison? But though inside a prison I do not feel like being a prisoner. I am not conscious of having done anything wrong.

My love to you all.

Yours

Whom you call UNCLE GANDHI."

20.1.32.

CHAPTER XI

WE GO VISITING

THE first visit we paid was on the second Sunday of his stay. After the tremendous rush and excitement, country air and country scenery seemed highly desirable to all of us. So we accepted Mrs. Eliot Howard's invitation and motored down to her house adjoining Epping Forest to spend the day there. The morning was spent in tramping through the sunshiny glades. Other holiday-makers occasionally looked a little taken aback as our party suddenly appeared; three stalwart Hindus, four or five English and small, spare, wiry, energetic-looking Mr. Gandhi in the midst of us all, making the pace. After lunch we had a two-hour conference attended by pacifist leaders from all over the country.

Most week-ends were spent out of London, staying with various friends.

The visit to Canterbury, where the Dean, Dr. Hewlett Johnson, entertained him, was perhaps the most appreciated of them all. Mr. Gandhi revelled in the beauty of the old city, the quiet worship in the Cathedral, the lovely simplicity of his host's home life.

At the next week-end I found a substitute to do my work in Bow and was therefore able to accompany our guests to Chichester. It was dark when we arrived. Sergeant Evans in the front seat of the car gave us the usual signal to awake Mr. Gandhi, as we were nearing our destination. The little city seemed very quiet, but as the car turned a corner we suddenly found ourselves in the midst of an excited, vociferous procession led by an energetic band. "An unemployed demonstration," I thought to myself, but as their excitement increased and the car slowed down, it dawned on us that this was no propaganda, no advertisement of any cause at all, but an outburst of enthusiasm at the arrival of an honoured guest. The Bishop of Chichester and Mrs. Bell had made everything in the palace exactly right for their visitors. It will be impossible, I think, for any of us who were there ever to forget that garden, those curving, solid, ivy-covered walls, the spacious peacefulness of their house. The travellers in the second car had said their prayers *en route* at the correct hour, seven o'clock, but they joined in again with the rest of us on the floor of the drawing-room as soon as the host and hostess' greetings were concluded. After dinner the huge room was filled with high ecclesiastics and there followed a long period devoted to the asking and answering of questions.

On Sunday the early morning walk led us by the banks of a stream which meandered along in a completely lazy and beautiful manner. It was typical of that ideal Sunday, for after breakfast we

ourselves meandered after the same mode round and round the sunlit walled-in garden; later on we leisurely climbed noble old towers and eventually found ourselves walking on the ancient walls. We all attended the Cathedral service in the afternoon and felt richer, saner, stronger and wiser for our sojourn among the things of the past.

The following week-end was spent at Eton and Oxford. The Head boy at Eton had invited Mr. Gandhi to address the boys' Club.

"Please will you give us the Hindu case?" was the first question put to him.

Mr. Gandhi replied: "You occupy an important place in England. Some of you perhaps will become Prime Ministers and Generals and Administrators in future years. I am anxious to enter your hearts whilst your character is still being moulded and whilst it is still easy to enter. I would like to place before you certain facts as opposed to the false history traditionally imparted to you. Among high officials I find ignorance, not absence of knowledge, but knowledge based on false data, and I want you to have true data before you. I think of you, not as Empire-builders, but as members of a nation which will one day have ceased exploiting other nations, and will perhaps have become the guardian of the peace of the world, not by force of arms but by its moral strength. Well, then, I tell you that there is no such thing as a Hindu case, at least, so far as I am concerned; in the matter of my country's freedom I am no more Hindu than you are.

“ There is a Hindu case put up by the Hindu Mahasabha representatives, who claim to represent the Hindu mind, but who, in my opinion, do not do so. They will have a national solution of the question, not because they are nationalists but because it suits them. I call that destructive tactics and am pleading with them that, representing as they do the great majority, they must step out and give to the smaller communities what they want; then the atmosphere would clear as if by magic. What the vast mass of Hindus feel and want, nobody knows, but claiming as I do to have moved amongst them all these years, I think they do not care for these pettifogging things; they are not troubled by the question of loaves and fishes in the shape of electoral seats and administrative posts. This bugbear of communalism is confined largely to the cities, which are not India, but which are the blotting sheets of London and other Western cities, which consciously or unconsciously prey upon villages and share with you in exploiting them, by becoming the commission agents of England. This communal question is of no importance compared with the great question of Indian freedom of which the British ministers are studiously fighting shy. They forget that they cannot go on for long with a discontented rebellious India—true, ours is non-violent rebellion—but it is rebellion none the less.

“ The freedom of India is a bigger thing than the disease, which for the time being is corroding some portions of the community, and if the constitutional question is satisfactorily solved, the communal

distemper will immediately vanish. The moment the alien wedge is removed the divided communities are bound to unite.

“ There is, therefore, no Hindu case, or if there is one it must go by the board. If you study this question it will profit you nothing, and when you go into its exasperating details you will be tempted, very likely, to prefer to see us drowned in the Thames. I am telling you God’s truth when I say that the communal question does not matter and should not worry you. But, if you will study history, study the much bigger questions, ‘ How did millions of people make up their minds to adopt non-violence and how did they adhere to it? ’ Study not man in his animal nature, man following the laws of the jungle, but study man in all his glory ; those engaged in communal squabbles are like specimens in a lunatic asylum ; but study men laying down their lives without hurting anyone else in the cause of their country’s freedom. Study men following the law of their higher nature, the law of love, so that when you grow to manhood you will have improved your heritage. It can be no pride to you that your nation is ruling over ours. No one chains a slave without chaining himself. And no nation keeps another in subjection without herself turning into a subject nation.

“ It is a most sinful connection, a most unnatural connection, that is existing at present between England and India, and I want you to bless our mission. Are we not entitled to our freedom? It is our birthright. We are doubly entitled to it,

by virtue of the penance and the suffering we have undergone.

"I want you, when you grow up, to make a unique contribution to the glory of your nation, by emancipating it from its sin of exploitation. Thus you will contribute to the progress of mankind."

Next day Mr. Gandhi motored on to Oxford, where we enjoyed the hospitality of the Master of Balliol and Mrs. Lindsay. In the evening he spoke at a crowded meeting of university students.

"Do you still believe in the good faith of England?" an Indian student asked.

"I believe in the good faith of England," said Mr. Gandhi, "to the extent that I believe in the good faith of human nature. I believe that the sum-total of the energy of mankind is not to bring us down but to lift us up. That is the result of the definite, though unconscious, working of the law of love. The fact that mankind persists at all shows that the cohesive force is greater than the disruptive.

"Inasmuch as I know only of the poetry of love, you need not be surprised that I trust the English people. I have often been bitter and I have often said to myself: 'When will this camouflage end? When will this people cease to exploit the poor?' But instinctively I get the reply, 'That is the heritage that they have had from Rome.' I must conduct myself in accordance with the dictates of the law of love, hoping and expecting in the long run to affect the English nature."

On Sunday morning we went to Mr. Edward Thompson's house on Boar's Hill to meet a group

of intellectuals profoundly interested in Indian problems. It seemed to me that new ground was being broken both then and at the afternoon meeting at Balliol College, where the Master had invited some forty or fifty of his friends to a further conference.

Mr. Gandhi demanded the freedom to err. "The long and short of it is," he said, "that you will not trust us. Well, give us the liberty to make mistakes. If we cannot handle our affairs to-day, who is to say when we will be able to do so? I do not want you to determine the pace. Consciously or unconsciously you adopt the rôle of divinity. I ask you for a moment to come down from that pedestal. I cannot imagine anything worse happening than is happening to-day, a whole humanity lying prostrate at the feet of a small nation."

"How far would you cut India off from the Empire?" asked someone.

"From the Empire entirely; from the British nation not at all. The British Empire is an Empire only because of India. The Emperorship must go. If it did I would love to be an equal partner with Britain, sharing her joys and sorrows as an equal partner with all the Dominions. But it must be a partnership on equal terms. It is only their government, not themselves, I want to get rid of. I can even visualise our choosing a British Prime Minister in India. We want you as friends. If only you would come down from Simla! You're seven thousand feet up in the clouds there while the people are prostrate. When you realise what wrong

has been done by England to nations like us, you will no longer sing, 'Britannia rules the waves' with any kind of pride. Things in English readers which are matters of pride to-day will have to be matters of shame in future and you will have to cease to take any pride over the defeat or humiliation of other nations."

CHAPTER XII

MORE VISITING

A BRITISH friend of Mr. Gandhi's wrote to Mr. Lloyd George directly the Round Table Conference began, to say that the Indian leader would very much like to meet him, but down at Churt illness intervened and it was not until the evening before the ex-premier sailed for Ceylon that the visit took place.

That night Mr. Gandhi was addressing a meeting of Red Cross workers in a big hall on the Surrey side of the river. I went to pick him up in Sir Putney's car. Mr. Lloyd George's secretary was there to give us final directions for the drive into the country. Mahadev saw that rugs were plentiful and Mira handed in the fruit basket which held Bapu's supper.

We spread out on our knees the picnic meal of grapes, dates and almond paste.

"Take some," said Bapu.

I had had tea and was to have supper at the end of the journey, but I could not resist the luscious-looking fruit.

"Yours is always the nicest food imaginable," I said. "I think I shall turn saint."

"You needn't go to that length in order to change your diet," he assured me.

The car rolled on through the lovely Surrey lanes, reached Churt at last and drew up outside the house Mr. Lloyd George built for himself years ago. It stands in a perfect position with heather-covered ground sloping away from it and stretching towards distant hills on the horizon. The smell of the pines all around and inside the house added greatly to its charm.

Not only Mr. Lloyd George but all the household staff seemed delighted to entertain Mr. Gandhi. In the drawing-room pine logs blazed, spluttering out showers of sparks. On each side of the wide hearth the two men sat in deep comfortable armchairs. To and fro the talk went for three hours. Mr. Gandhi set himself the task of explaining everything; the financial impasse, the army tangle, the Untouchables' representation, the Hindu-Moslem situation, the drink and opium problem. As he talked, Mr. Lloyd George punctuated his guest's sentences with appreciative exclamations. They seemed to understand each other from the start and to enjoy each other's company. There were references, of course, to parallel situations in the Welsh nationalist struggle and in the Irish rebellion of 1917.

But I do not know if deep down spiritually the two men are akin. Do they mean the same thing when they use the same terms? Do they really talk the same language? Did the flaming spirit of the Indian seer, trained as he is to self-suffering, stir the Welshman for the moment only or for good?

It was far easier to agree with Mr. Gandhi that night than to combat him.

Will that vision of a free India persist? Which of us, whether he be saint or ordinary person or ex-prime minister, dare lightly choose Mr. Gandhi's way? For this is what he says to us: "Get free from the domination of desire, do not seek power or pleasure; eschew privilege, keep yourself united to God every minute of every day; then in face of starvation, prison and violence you will be able to evoke from your people that endurance which, if persisted in without fear or anger, must lead to freedom."

Mr. Gandhi met Lady Astor at a reception. They got on well, admired each other's children, laughed with and at each other, agreed to differ about politics and arranged to meet again. The time was fixed for Armistice Day, 11 a.m. We started from Knightsbridge in good time to get into the crowd in Trafalgar Square for the two minutes' silence. Sergeant Evans procured a fine big poppy for Mr. Gandhi, and I watched to see how the silence would impress him and how the thousands of citizens, mindful of a great sorrow, would react towards the presence of a rebel in their midst.

As the car slowed down, frozen into the block of traffic, he was recognised immediately with smiles of welcome and handwaving. Then the gun was heard, the sirens started moaning, and in the sudden hush all sorts of forgotten feelings were aroused, deep-buried sorrows laid bare, a passion of pity and regret unloosed. Everything seemed fraught with significance, even the beatings of pigeons' wings as

they circled round and round the square, startled perhaps as much by the abrupt ceasing of the fountain's play as by the guns.

How much, I wondered, was my companion feeling or understanding all this? But the tears that fill one's eyes blur the sight even if they do not fall, and I was looking out of the window at the mass of my countrymen—fellow-sufferers—all remembering in sorrow that whole generation of our best and dearest. How could we fitly honour them in a post-war world of cynical self-seeking? When would the call ring out for equal daring to-day, for valour in creative thinking; for bold initiative to thrust a way through the vicious circle that perpetuates barrenness and bankruptcy? If the people were only told the truth, they would be as ready to respond to a call to service now as in 1914. But this time it would be service for Life, not for Death. What finer material is there in the world than a crowd of our fellow-citizens? Independence of spirit inherited through centuries of awareness to political and public affairs, religious experience, courage, humour, common-sense—so much fineness and so much of it wasted, pandered to by the Press, its originality stultified by a skimped education, discouraged by its rulers from exercising its imagination.

The sirens sound again. Faces lose their tenseness and pallor and everything begins to move. For twelve months the pigeons will not create another sensation. Eyesight becomes normal.

“There! You've been at the very heart of the

people now. I hope you found the real thing?" I said.

He mused a moment. "I've been in the silence before in India," he observed.

"Yes, but it's not the same when it's kept in another country. Englishmen seem to undergo some change when they leave England. I suppose Armistice Day in Bombay would be imposed from on top, as a valuable Imperial asset, an assumed and exaggerated emotion. Here you see it real, observed by the poor, the homeless. Glittering swords and smart uniforms don't represent England."

At 11.5 Lord Astor met us at his door and took us to an upstairs sitting-room, flooded with sunlight and entirely beautiful with flowers and greenery that seemed to be a part of the wallpaper or growing from the floor, a vision of perfect delight to Bow eyes.

Lady Astor introduced her friend, a Christian Science lecturer, and we sank into chairs that were delicious havens of comfort.

"Can't you make your holy man see how dangerous his policy is?" she said to me, then turning to him, "You only destroy. I believe you're a humbug and Miss Lester's more holy than you are really. We English may be making lots of mistakes, of course we are, doing all sorts of funny wrong things, but we do create, we're making something."

The wildest of her accusations was made with a broad smile and Mr. Gandhi always had a Roland for her Oliver. She kept up a spirited attack upon him, often choosing a point of view directly opposed

to the last she had used, every now and then referring to the lecturer for spiritual confirmation of one of her points.

When she had said her say, and it was quite a long one, he asked if she were now ready to listen to him, or did she want to go on talking. She said she would listen, and he asked her to promise not to interrupt but save her criticisms till he had made his defence.

She promised, kept forgetting, chipping in and forthwith apologising.

“I want you to understand the facts; only then can you form opinions. At present you do not know the facts. You say we can only destroy; we do not create. I will tell you what we have set up in India during this last fourteen years.”

Out of it all came the story he loves to tell: the village work, the revival of peasant industries, the setting up of home industries that provide subsidiary employment during the lean months of an agricultural labourer’s year, the organising of gangs of villagers in co-operative effort for the improvement of sanitary conditions, the loan clubs that have rescued thousands of victims from the money-lenders’ hands, the temperance propaganda, finally the awakening of women and their emergence from Purdah with a new passion for righteousness. Here, of course, Lady Astor caught fire. Who could remain unmoved by the story of what happened when he called on the women to carry on his work while he went to gaol in 1930?

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I had heard about it from Miss Mary Campbell, whose lifelong service for Indian women gained her the Kaiser-i-Hind medal from the King. She was an eye-witness of happenings in Delhi that astounded all spectators. Purdah women who had not been in the outside world since they were children, quietly took up their station outside the opium and drink shops and withstood the storm of curiosity evoked. Timid women, who had never let a man see them except their husbands and brothers and fathers, now spoke to each customer, requesting him to think a little more deeply and forgo his drink. And they were effective. The men were shamed by their courage ; they thanked them for reminding them of their duty and passed on. After a day or two the shops were deserted, then shut up. Soon the owners made representations to the Government. Did they not pay good money for their licences for a whole year? Why then should their houses be profitless? The police must protect their property and remove the women. The Government conceded the point ; their excise revenue was also seriously imperilled. So it was decided to station large policemen outside the shops who should remove the pickets. Surely that would daunt them ! What purdah woman would be expected to endure a police van and a solitary drive to an Indian police station and all the indignity of prison life?

So the shops were reopened and unhappy-looking men ensconced therein to serve, and the police arrested the pickets and drove off with them, but always other women stepped forward to take their

place. Arrest followed arrival each time. So the unequal contest went on between large, unthinking servants of the law and the newly-awakened women. The forces were ill matched. Those who only had force on their side were pitted against those who could only suffer. The victory remained with those who could only suffer. There accrued no profit from the policy of keeping the shops open by force. No one entered the places, and the bartenders, feeling unpopular and ashamed, compounded with their consciences by seeing to it that the shelves were empty of all bottles. They graced liquor shops innocent of liquor—while outside still stood the big policemen and the little purdah women.

After this spate of facts, there were arguments, digressions, exceptions, presuppositions, hypotheses, flying about the room for a long time, until at last somehow or other, just as we were going, the conversation got down deep—very deep—so that all five of us became conscious of the source of all aspiration—faith in the fact of God. Here was common ground. Here it was easy to agree. Here we had reached the root and ground of hope; and here we parted, promising each other another meeting.

I felt very happy to have met Lady Astor at last. We had once had a little adventure by telephone which had caused us to trust each other. During the fateful ten days of the strike in 1926, when most of the public-spirited people in Bow were pulling their full weight in the effort to keep the neighbour-

hood quiet, orderly and free from either panic, irresponsible propaganda or excitement, Bow Brewery began to give away free drinks to all who cared to come for them. It was a notable sight; free beer had become a fact rather than a music-hall joke. Excitement rose high. Many were convinced that it was a scheme to break down the will to win among the workers. To others it looked like part of a general plan to foment irresponsible violence, which could then be adduced as a sufficient reason to justify the imposition of martial law by the military already stationed in Victoria Park.

Meanwhile people were getting sillier with beer every moment, and I was just starting off to appeal to the manager of the Brewery, when the 'phone bell rang and there was Lady Astor talking at the other end of the wire. I told her what was happening at the Brewery and she immediately took over full responsibility, published the facts up and down the passages of St. Stephen's and the scandal was stopped.

On our next visit to St. James's Square Mr. Gandhi took his spinning with him. "Now listen to the music I'm going to make for you," he said to Lady Astor as he set up his travelling wheel on the drawing-room hearthrug. He spun his daily quota before we went in to dinner. Lord Lothian and the Christian Science lecturer were our fellow-guests. We heard a good deal about healing, but Mr. Gandhi did not seem to be impressed by it. However, as we drove away at eight o'clock to attend an

informal conference of Indian Round Table delegates at Dorchester House, I asked Mr. Gandhi if he minded such attempts to convert him.

"I am so well accustomed to it," he said. "People of so many religions have tried to convert me to their own. It is very good of them, of course. It has helped me a great deal, because they all quote the finest things in their religion ; they give me its greatest literature. I get acquainted with its best interpretation, and that is very good for me. I learn a great deal that way."

I was very comfortable in Dorchester House, sitting waiting for the conference to end. But the contrast made an impact upon one that seemed almost violent. The glittering appointments ! the smooth working of this giant home of luxury ! How dull this automatic and uniform perfection of service can seem when it is performed professionally instead of by love ! Men and women came and went, sophisticated, perfectly clothed, but apparently strangers either to joy or to wonder. From the ballroom came strains of the latest dance music. In the restaurant was every gustatory pleasure. Expensive flowers were everywhere.

Soon my guest came out. We had to wait a minute for the car to be called. We sat in the hall. At sight of him, was there visible a faint dispersal of boredom from the faces of some of the other occupants of the hall ? I thought so. But it may have been imagination. My guest and I returned to the realities of Bow, to sorrow, joy, prayer and service.

CHAPTER XIII

HINDU AND CHRISTIAN TEACHING

“ You know, Bapu,” I remarked once on an early morning walk, “ we come to each other’s prayers and I feel absolutely one with you all, spiritually, but when I start analysing the situation I suspect myself of being a hypocrite. You understand Christianity; you love Christ; you follow His ways better than I do. But I never entered Hindu temples if I could help it while I was in India, and I dislike Hindu institutions. I don’t mean just Untouchability and Child Marriage; I know that they are as much anathema to you and your followers as they are to me, and you’ve explained that they are not a real part of Hinduism; I realise, too, that the days of their ascendancy are numbered. But I don’t like Hinduism and, except for some of its literature, I’ve never found anything in it to appeal to me.”

Without a second’s pause and in his usual matter-of-fact tones, my guest answered: “ Then we must put an hour aside each day until you do understand it.”

As I hated the thought of elongating his time-table we decided to devote the hour of the morning

walk to this study; so all the unfortunates who happened to choose either of the next three days for accompanying Mr. Gandhi on his matutinal promenade, had to put on one side their own questions and problems, and hearken to his instruction of me. The course was rounded off by his presenting me with one of Max Müller's books, "What India has to Teach Us."

Our arguments ranged over such subjects as the sacredness of all life, the position of women, Kali worship, untouchability, re-incarnation, caste, cleanliness, fasting, the Bagh-vad-gita, the neglect, torture or killing of cattle, prayer and idol-worship.

I do not yet admire Hinduism but I believe that India can interpret Christianity to the West in such a way that it will capture the world.

I believe that the all-absorbing passion with which Hindus for thousands of years have concentrated on the search for reality is going soon to bear fruit which will be for the healing of the nations. Many "Rishis" have spent lives of meditation and contemplation in Himalayan caves or by the wild rhododendron bushes on the mountain side, but now the fruit of their search is being absorbed not only by the common people of India, peasants trained as they are to receptiveness in the sphere of religion, but by the people of the West, people as obstinate and stiff-necked as myself, people who have been drenched in common-sense for centuries.

"Truth is God and the way to Him is Non-Violence." It has taken centuries for this to find its

way across two continents into the minds of us East Enders, but it has arrived and kindled a spark that was already there. How often have I watched a quiet, wise, Bow mother listen while her men-folk were discussing foreign affairs, or reading from the evening paper details of some new development in our Imperial expansion or some quietly enacted annexation. The careful camouflage of the Press has not been wholly successful; the men mutter the useful word, "Exploitation"; but the woman expresses herself in a phrase more personal and concrete, characteristic of herself. "I reckon England's greedy," she murmurs ruminatively. She makes this pronouncement in a tone so low and unassertive as to be unheeded by the powers that be, but her summing-up of the situation is perhaps destined to build the bridge that must link East and West if civilisation is to be saved.

Up to now, much of the spiritual searching of the East has been unpractical. Only since Gandhi's advent has their religion come right down into the maelstrom of politics and shaped a national programme.

Up till now, the international problems of the West have been unsolvable. Only since the advent of women in public affairs, have elections been fought over a programme that is based on the Sermon on the Mount.

The great contribution that India has to make to the other nations of the world is religious, to bring God into politics.

"Ours is a new sort of rebellion," says Gandhi.

“ We have no hate against any of you. We will not hurt a hair of your head.”

This programme heralding a new dispensation for our bankrupt world and implying a new sort of armaments, definitely cheaper than ours, is traceable to Hindu holy books.

“ The righteous may fall before the blows of the wicked as doth the sandal tree which, when it is felled, perfumes the axe which lays it low.”

“ When he who is beating you drops his stick, stoop down, pick it up, return it to him without a word.”

“ Just as the earth cherishes and sustains those who tear and rend her bosom with the plough, so must we return good for evil.”

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The new method Mr Gandhi is introducing into politics is self-suffering; never to forget what it is to be hungry, being reminded of it every day by one's own hunger; no kicking away of that ladder by which one has climbed to high position; no other nasty little vulgarities; no aloofness from one's followers; no measuring of a man's greatness by the length of the hall traversed in order to approach him; but a complete identification with the commonest people—a sort of atonement.

After all, we followers of Christ can never get away from the tremendous challenge in the parable of the sheep and the goats. There is no more potent incentive towards altering the economic system than to know that whenever old people have to go to bed directly after tea because they are too cold to sit

up any longer, blankets and closed windows being cheaper than fuel, it is Christ who is suffering cold. Whenever children remain pallid and thin because they belong to one of the many families short of nourishment, Christ is going short also. Whenever a father sits by an empty grate downcast and disconsolate because he cannot fulfil his proper function as breadwinner, his instinct for protecting and cherishing his family being denied expression at every turn, so Christ is denied also.

I know women who have brought up their families with great affection and love, having to finish their days in the workhouse, their personality lost, being merely Number Three or Four in Ward A or B, surrounded by feeble-minded, doddering people, having to take their last meal at half-past three in the afternoon and put to bed at 6 p.m. They tell me that it is those long nights that are the horror, when nothing happens, nothing to keep off thought—thought about the happy past, thought about a meaningless future. As long as we let them suffer these things while we continue to live in plenty and comfort, so long do we let Christ suffer.

“Nothing shall be common or unclean.” Peter published to the whole world the message he had heard in his vision.

The Hindus put on one side a portion of every meal for the dumb creatures that we only shrink from. All life is sacred, therefore the snake must be fed. A child will be sent with a few drops of milk to deposit in a saucer near its home. At

Phœnix, where Gandhi began his experiment in communal living and tried to embody in everyday action his conviction that all life was sacred, a tarantula took up its abode in the corner of one bedroom. One of the English friends had to discipline her spirit not to let her body shrink from sleeping in the same room. She managed it, however, and eventually the tarantula betook itself off. But snakes would appear, and that meant an even sterner self-discipline. One English settler, when he asked to be accepted into the community, was warned of the difficulty he would be sure to feel in such circumstances, when it is instinctive in us Britons to seize a stick or stone and attack. He accepted the new requirements. All went well for a few weeks, and then one day as he went into the tool-shed for his bicycle he heard a movement behind him and saw a huge snake. He somehow managed to hold back his hand. The effort to keep quiet made him press his body back against the wall of the shed. He tried to relax the tension and to think of the poisonous creature as God's. Sweat broke out upon his face as he waited, for the thing was moving towards him. Then it glided past him and went out of the door. He heaved a great sigh of relief, but it was cut short in the middle, for there in the darkest corner appeared another poison-laden creature gliding out in the wake of the first. Then indeed he realised the power of non-violence; for if he had killed the first, its mate would assuredly have killed him.

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There is deeper truth than we have yet assimilated in the teaching of the Indian Contemplatives. Major Yeats-Brown quotes in *Bengal Lancer*, from a Rishi friend of his in India: "Your civilisation has done wonderful things. You have almost conquered the earth with your telescopes and trains and battleships. You can move and control almost everything—except your thoughts and the food in your bowels. You look outwards too much. Our methods are more reasonable."

"Inability to control our thoughts and the food in our bowels." Perhaps this is our main trouble, and hence the many thousands of pounds spent every year in keeping up hospitals, nursing homes and asylums. Perhaps it is this same thing that has over-crowded the Divorce Courts and has made our public hoardings look foolish with a continually changing series of sex-intoxicated men and women.

To be fit, to enjoy perfect wholeness, to be well balanced, imperturbable and highly vitalised, seems to have been regarded by Jesus Christ as the natural inheritance of a child of God. "I came that ye might have life and have it in greater fullness," He said, and it was not the words He used but the abounding vitality He possessed, the unity with God that He felt, that made Him a healer.

"What can I do to get your sort of life, the life that lasts?" asked the bored youth, who sought Him out one day, a little jaded, more than a little disillusioned, embarrassed by his riches and the distorted scale of values that great wealth seems to impose on its possessors.

This young villager, this wandering countryman who attracted men and women of every class and every shade of opinion, was Himself obviously unified, complete. Instead of psychological jargon let's use the English words—whole, hale, holy—they all mean the same thing. In Him there was none of that conflict with which we are too familiar; the confusion of mind, the baffled, thwarted sense that appears in the ubiquitous post-war whine, "It's all very difficult." All these things impede the free flow of God's good spirit which upholds life in all creatures, but in His habit of life tiredness seems to have had no place.

We hear once only of His being weary; when His friends went to make purchases without Him and left Him alone by a well. Perhaps there was another reason for His choosing to stay there alone. It was midday, and a certain woman who didn't care to come at the usual time with the respectable and virtuous water-drawers was even now on her way to fetch the day's supply for her household. What sort of weariness was that which could not disturb the mind and spirit but provided the very relaxation and communion with God that inspired that strange conversation with the Samaritan? How much wisdom and inspiration we have inherited from His stray talks with adulteresses and prostitutes!

We can doubt the actuality of that weariness that the disciples probably imagined. "Fancy His preferring to sit there alone instead of coming with us!" Can't you hear them saying it?

The way of Christ is assuredly the way of perfect health.

This conviction is at the root of the far-spread movement of spiritual healing, and here the best thought of the West touches, mingles with and complements the teaching from India.

CHAPTER XIV

THE END OF THE CONFERENCE

DURING the first week of his stay in England it was arranged that Mr. Gandhi should speak at the House of Commons to a meeting of Labour members and answer their questions. After tea and some leisure time on the Terrace, the meeting was held in Committee Room no. 10. Long after it was over, members kept coming up for his autograph. George Lansbury insisted on changing fountain pens with him and talk extended until it was nearing prayer time. Was there time to get back to Knightsbridge by seven o'clock?

“Why not pray here?” suggested someone.

It seemed a sensible arrangement, so the door was shut and we sat, some on chairs and some on the floor, while chants and invocations, petitions and aspirations were voiced for us all by our Indian friends. Because of the rare quietness we were experiencing, we could hear the rush and swirl of Father Thames outside the windows, hurrying past the House of Commons on its way to the sea.

Every week a special prayer time was kept for Indian affairs in the Friends' Meeting House, which Round Table Conference members of various

religions attended. It seemed that at last, British people were really taking their Indian responsibility seriously. Members of Parliament were beginning to realise that the fate of 350,000,000 human beings depended to a great extent upon them. The old reproach that the opening of an Indian debate signalled empty benches in the House had vanished. Publishers reported that the public were actually buying books about India. M.P.s. were presented with copies of other books than "Mother India." We all felt hopeful.

Then came an election. It needs a strong imagination to turn one's thoughts away from one's own impending bankruptcy in order to consider a situation so far distant as seven thousand miles. Also it soon became apparent that the more one studied it, the more intricate it proved. Take this Untouchable question, for instance. At first it seemed clear that Mr. Gandhi was the Untouchables' champion. Had he not worked for them for ten years? Did he not offend all the Brahmin's canons of righteousness by adopting one of them into his home and family? Had we not heard over and over again of the many schools for Untouchables set up by his followers in various cities? And was it not obvious that the old curse was breaking down at last, when these schools were being run by Brahmins who risked all by eating, sleeping and living with their pupils? Was it not constantly reported in the Press all over India, how when he was on tour, the most rigid arrangements for keeping Untouchables apart and outside the meetings were ignored by Mr.

Gandhi and if the caste people would not welcome the Untouchables, he would take up his position in the midst of the unsalubrious crowd, and from that doubtful vantage point address whoever cared to listen? Had not his volunteers taken Untouchables under their charge and gone with them on pilgrimages to the sacred shrines, and when permission to enter had been denied to their companions, had not the volunteers stayed outside the temple precincts too, day after day, week after week, praying to God to take away the temple guardian's heart of stone and give him instead a heart of tenderness? And had not the Untouchables' right of entry been won to many a temple just because of this tireless propaganda?

But now here was an Untouchable, the only one at the Conference, Dr. Ambedkar, wholly repudiating Mr. Gandhi, denying that he understood their case and claiming communal representation for his people, while Mr. Gandhi declared that this would be a fatal gift to bestow upon them.

What was the British public to believe? Communal representation? It was not clear what those words involved.

Mazed by the use of unaccustomed phrases, in ignorance of the geographical vastness of India, with a very natural predisposition to take for granted that the same words have the same meaning whether they are used to describe English or Indian affairs, our fellow-countrymen soon realised that they could make neither head nor tail of the situation and grew discouraged.

Was Dr. Ambedkar or Mr. Gandhi right? Who was likely to know best where the shoe pinched? Citizens living on the poverty line, the equivalent in England of the Untouchables, began to say that *they* had continued to suffer just so long as they were represented by middle-class champions, who gave their lives for them, sentimentalised about them, but would not get off their backs. It was a new view of Mr. Gandhi that people were beginning to get in this connection. He was standing up to Dr. Ambedkar and declaring to the whole British nation that he, Mr. Gandhi, knew better what the Untouchables wanted, than their accredited representative. To the merest tyro in British politics, this sounded both a familiar and dangerous attitude. Was it possible that Mr. Gandhi was unconsciously harbouring that jealousy, meanness and egotism that is always ubiquitous in politics? People suspended judgment.

Then also the breach between the Hindus and Moslems seemed to be widening to an alarming extent. Now that his brother had died, Shaukat Ali was taking his place at the Round Table Conference, and he seemed to many of us, his old friends, to have become a different man from the kindly, tolerant, humour-loving, genial leader of the old days when he was hailed as "big brother" by Mr. Gandhi and his followers. He seemed now to be almost querulous whenever his old chief's name was mentioned.

"But I believe in peace," he would reiterate. "Let us make a good peace. We can't keep up the quarrel for ever."

This sounded very good to the ears of British officialdom. If the Moslems could be brought to make a separate peace by the gift of advantageous terms would it not be a further justification of the old cliché of Imperial Rome? Eight months previously, just after his brother's death at the first Round Table Conference, Shaukat Ali had been referring to Mr. Gandhi as "My Chief! My Chief! If only he had come here! He ought to have been in London now!"

Thus he bemoaned in my presence Mr. Gandhi's absence from the Conference.

His wish had been granted. Mr. Gandhi had arrived and the breach was wider than ever.

"We Moslems stand for peace," reiterated Shaukat Ali.

But the word is an overworked one when it has to do duty both for the temporal, partial, reward-bringing treaty and the inward, eternal and spiritual condition that Mr. Gandhi had trained his followers to recognise as a necessary precondition to independence.

Several homilies were delivered during the interminable session of the Round Table Conference, on the necessity for Moslem-Hindu unity, but the best little sermons given by the most exalted Englishmen inevitably fell wide of the mark. Quarrels cannot be compounded by law or by the most eloquent address delivered by those in authority. Did we not learn that in the nursery? Interference by an alien power or even by the most logical minister only emphasises and underlines the points of

difference. It is the propagandist who makes the quarrels, and so long as simple people can be stampeded by simulated religious fervour and a kept press, propagandists will use these efficient weapons which are always ready to their hand. During the wrangles of the Round Table Conference thousands of Indian villagers and peasants were living together in amity and concord, Moslems and Hindus going to each other's festivals, helping each other in difficulties, rejoicing with each other in times of plenty. But homilies on unity were popular in the British Press and the spectacle of Mr. Gandhi and Dr. Ambedkar "having a scrap" was too delicious a morsel not to serve up with savoury sauce. It was a very small minority of our fellow-countrymen that saw what was really happening in the Untouchable problem. Communal representation for Untouchables appeared on the face of it like a good gift, but it was quite obvious to anyone who had the key to the situation that it would be a curse. Communal representation means a separate electorate. If they had that, the Untouchables would only be able to register their votes as Untouchables and in the very act of voting, their shackles would be made permanent—those shackles from which Mr. Gandhi had vowed to deliver them. His followers were out to destroy Untouchability, to remove its stigma, its very name. The "depressed classes" should vote as men, as citizens, free to use their suffrage as they chose.*

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"Muslims and Sikhs are all well organised. The Untouchables are not. There is very little political consciousness

Towards the end of November I found him one morning deep in the Indian mail, sorrow lining his brow.

amongst them, and they are so horribly treated that I want to save them against themselves. If they had separate electorates, their lives would be miserable in villages which are the stronghold of Hindu orthodoxy. It is the superior class of Hindus who have to do penance for having neglected the Untouchables for ages. That penance can be done by active social reform and by making the lot of the Untouchables more bearable by acts of service, but not by asking for separate electorates for them. By giving them separate electorates you will throw the apple of discord between the Untouchables and the orthodox. You must understand, I can tolerate the proposal for special representation of the Musalmans and the Sikhs only as a necessary evil. It would be a positive danger for the Untouchables.

“ Separate electorates to the Untouchables will ensure them bondage in perpetuity. The Musalmans will never cease to be Musalmans, by having separate electorates. Do you want the Untouchables to remain Untouchables for ever? Well, the separate electorates would perpetuate the stigma. What is needed is destruction of Untouchability, and when you have achieved it, the bar sinister which has been imposed by an insolent ‘superior’ class upon an ‘inferior’ class will be destroyed. When you have destroyed the bar sinister, to whom will you give the separate electorates? Look at the history of Europe. Have you got separate electorates for the working-class men or women? With adult franchise you give the Untouchables complete security. Even the orthodox Hindus would have to approach them for votes.

“ How then, you ask, does Dr. Ambedkar, their representative, insist on separate electorates for them? I have the highest regard for Dr. Ambedkar. He has every right to be bitter. That he does not break our heads is an act of self-restraint on his part. He is to-day so very much saturated with suspicion that he cannot see anything else. He sees in every Hindu a determined opponent of the Untouchables, and it is quite natural. The same thing happened to me in my early days in South Africa, where I was hounded out by the Europeans wherever I went. It is quite natural for him to vent his wrath. But the separate electorates that he seeks will not give him social reform. He may himself mount to

"Is it bad news?" I inquired.

"Grave news indeed," he answered. "A letter from Jaharwarlal Nehru; it may be the last he can send. His arrest seems imminent."

"Why should they arrest him just now?" I asked.

"Because he's telling the peasants not to sell themselves in order to pay the Land Tax," Mr. Gandhi replied. "He is telling them not to sell their cattle, not to sell their homes, but rather to go to prison for non-payment. For if they make a tremendous effort to pay, perhaps thereby going deep into a debt from which they will never get free, then the Government says: 'There! you see you had the money all the time; you could have paid it months ago instead of assuring us you were too poor.' The Collectors have such power; nowhere else in the world is such great power lodged in an Executive. They can do as they will. While there is life in me, do you think I will let the spirit of these poor peasants be broken? Your Government tries to bring us the blessings of Western civilisation. It says: 'Here are cinemas for you, cheap holidays for you, licensed houses for you,' but the cry is always the same: 'Give us bread.'* It must be difficult for you English to understand what the Ordinances

power and position, but nothing good will accrue to the Untouchables. I can say all this with authority, having lived with the Untouchables and having shared their joys and sorrows all these years." Excerpt from one of Mr. Gandhi's speeches to students.

* See Appendix E.

mean. When you hear that powers are given over to the police, you think of the police as you know them. I tell you the police in England are gentlemen; the word means something quite different in India. I have talked to high police officials in England and have come to know many of them. It is not surprising that they are so fine. Do you know that every time they drill they have to repeat together: 'We are the servants of the people. We are the servants of the people'? so that the words may sink into their hearts. And it is true. They are your servants. Their functions are performed as service; but in India the police are men recruited by an alien government, loafers, criminals, hooligans, the dregs of society. No wonder, then, that they act as they do. You cannot blame them. If they are given power, they can seize anybody they happen to have a personal grudge against and make them pay for it. Can't you see for yourself what easy opportunities there are for them to satisfy their resentment? They have no natural contact with the people. They are merely machines. They train themselves to interpret even a look on the face of their officers. These Ordinances put a whole village at their mercy.* They make a circle round it so that none can escape, then draw in their lines and get the whole village into their power on suspicion, and imprison without trial."

A few mornings later Mr. Gandhi told me he had had a long talk with the Secretary of State for India, and in the course of discussion about certain

* See Appendix F.

eventualities, Sir Samuel Hoare had announced that Congress would have to be crushed.

I listened very attentively, for I knew what a high opinion Mr. Gandhi had of Sir Samuel Hoare. "He is an honest man," he used to say. "I have never met a more honest man." That character study of him in the *Daily Herald* was perfect. I could have dotted all Mr. Laski's i's and crossed all his t's. You can always see into Sir Samuel's mind. He hides nothing. I like dealing with him. He puts all his cards on the table."

"But surely we couldn't crush Congress, could we?" I inquired, thinking how repression always strengthens the will to resist.

"Of course not," answered Mr. Gandhi serenely. "I begged Sir Samuel to reconsider the position. It would be such a tremendous strain on both communities, ours and yours, if you were to set yourselves to do it. I reminded him that previous Viceroys, Lord Chelmsford and Lord Harding, had already recognised Congress. He pointed out that it was different, in that there was rebellion now and he could not tolerate rebellion. I said to him: 'But, Sir Samuel, what do you mean by rebellion? Has there ever been in history before a rebellion like this? Rebellion is not terrible, is it, when it's completely peaceful? We do not feel any enmity with you.' He said that while Congress was in rebellion it could not be tolerated; especially as it was setting up an alternative government. I told him we were assuredly performing certain functions proper to Government, but only because they had not

been fulfilled by Government. We have weaned the drunkard away from his habit and made him a useful citizen. We plead guilty certainly to that, while the Government encourages drinking through its Excise system. We are providing work for the unemployed so that thousands of families have been saved from the curse of indebtedness by our Khaddar workers. That is also Government work. We are setting up our own courts to which many prefer to come, although the service is voluntary. Sir Samuel said that he might appear to be a hard man, he might even be called in after years a bad man, but he would rather appear as hard and as black as anyone liked to declare, than that any one should ever be able to say of him that he promised things that afterwards he failed to perform. 'Ah!' I said, 'I can meet you there, Sir Samuel, I shake hands with you over that. It's a point of unity between us, your truthfulness. Thank you.' "

In November General Smuts was passing through London. He and Mr. Gandhi were old friends. Twenty years ago the Indian leader had come into conflict with the General in South Africa while championing the cause of the indentured labourers there. When he failed to gain concessions from General Smuts, he planned a great march of five thousand labourers into the Transvaal. According to his usual practice of the Vow of Truth, he informed General Smuts of what he meant to do. The night before he set out, he 'phoned him again, but was rung off. After a day's marching he was arrested, but the campaign continued according to plan.

Eventually the African leader changed his tactics and released Mr. Gandhi in order to help draw up peace terms. Now in this crisis of 1932, so eager was General Smuts that the British Government and Mr. Gandhi should understand one another, that he lengthened his stay in London in the hope of being useful to that end. On the eve of sailing General Smuts gave an interview to the Press in the following terms:—

“ The present Indian position is by far the most important and perhaps the most dangerous problem facing the country. Great Britain must make up her mind to go pretty far in satisfying India, and the sooner the better, as the present favourable situation for settlement may not last long. I am convinced that Mr. Gandhi is sincerely anxious to come to a fair settlement, and his power, while it lasts, is an enormous asset to Britain in its efforts to arrive at a settlement. Mr. Gandhi speaks for a large part of India and can deliver the goods as no other Indian leader can. Every effort should now be made to prevent further misunderstanding and a recrudescence of disorder in India with all the misery it might lead to. Force is no remedy, and neither the modern spirit nor the British temper will permit the application of a real policy of repression. If the Conference is unable to come to the conclusion of its labours now, it should adjourn at such a stage and with such a spirit of mutual understanding and good-will that its work could almost immediately be resumed, and pressed to an early conclusion. Neither the Communal question nor Reservations appears to

form an insuperable bar to an early grant of an Indian constitution, but perhaps even more important at present is a spirit of mutual trust and understanding and avoidance of any action which might create suspicion between the Indian and the British leaders. I am convinced that both sides honestly mean to come to a settlement and that is a priceless asset in dealing with a most difficult situation. I am sure the British people regard with goodwill every effort to accelerate a settlement and keep India a contented member of the Commonwealth.” *

After a few days, hope of conciliation rose once more; further interviews with Sir Samuel Hoare and the Prime Minister were held. Anxiety seemed to drop away, and in its place came optimism.

Then came the last session of the Conference. It was a full-dress affair, microphone and all, with an alcove made of screens for such interested observers as Lady Reading, Mrs. Pethick Lawrence, etc.

Mr. MacDonald’s pronouncement had been eagerly awaited by optimists, but it was fairly clear that its conciliation lay more in the tone of his voice and his beautiful phrases of friendliness than in any acts of generosity; concessions were implied, not given. It seemed to me as though we had all been

* This is the text of the interview according to a Reuter’s telegram, but it was never published. What an ironic commentary on the power of the Press for good and for ill! This telegram was not considered worth publishing, but another, sent from Rome a week later, which contained a pernicious lie calculated to destroy good relationship between Britain and India, was published all over the country and quoted by everyone.

invited there to a banquet for which the floral decorations were superb but the food was non-apparent. The formulas were still hollow, though announced by a skilled orator with a wonderful voice.

Mr. Gandhi had to reply. Plainly his task was difficult. He could not express a gratitude that was non-existent, but it would seem uncouth to be unresponsive to so many implied concessions. He concentrated, therefore, on expressing the gratitude of all Conference members to the Prime Minister for his tireless energy, his able chairmanship, his time-sense, his punctuality and his businesslike qualities.

The Prime Minister in his reply said: "My dear Mahatma, let us go on with this way of co-operation. It may be the only way. Should we not link our political ideas to the glorious, spiritual impulses which lie at the source of all our dealings? . . . One thing I quarrel with Mr. Gandhi about. Why does he refer to himself in relation to me as an old man? Surely it was a young man who spoke to us in such rousing tones this morning at 1 a.m.? Mr. Gandhi has the advantage over me in youth. I do not know who looks the younger, but I think I am much nearer the end of my time than he. It was an old man who sat in the chair and kept you all at work. It was this young man here who made me get up at six o'clock this morning. In future conferences, Mr. Gandhi may be taking the chair and, if so, I should like to come and hear if he is an apt pupil of mine in the time-sense. I wish you all a very good

voyage. Remember we are enlisted in the same cause and bound by the same loyalty."

As the conference rose, there was much hand-shaking, good-bye making and a sense of friendliness. We drove away immediately to the private flat of one of the members, where the sitting-room was soon crowded out with Indian leaders, Moderates as well as Congress men. They had all foregathered to study the text of Mr. MacDonald's pronouncement. I soon found myself deplored Mr. Gandhi's well-known habit of considering as paramount the physical needs of Europeans. I was intensely interested in this roomful of eager, diverse personalities, and was thrilled to be at such a meeting and to hear all the different shades of opinion. However, it was past one o'clock, and Mr. Gandhi always remembers European meal hours. In the midst of weighty problems a table was brought in and food served to me despite my every protest. I ate some for politeness' sake, and quickly settled down to listen, but Mr. Gandhi interrupted the discussion of a supremely important question to turn to me and inquire blandly why I had stopped so much sooner than usual. It was almost unbearable, but his insistence forced me to continue regaling myself with nourishment.

CHAPTER XV

PARIS ENTERTAINS HIM

5.30 A.M. Mr. Gandhi descends from the roof, enters the pitch-dark praying place, makes his way across it to the front door, avoiding skilfully the chairs put ready for the prayer, greets the bevy of police, the detectives and the visitors, and proceeds for his last walk along the streets of Bow.

6.30 a.m. He returns for bath and breakfast.

8.15 a.m. Good-byes begin. The twelve weeks' watch of the police has come to an end. Mr. Gandhi shakes hands with them and with the neighbours who have been waiting for the last hour to see him off. The local Indian doctor's car goes for the last time slipping round the corner, preceded by the powerful police car which assures us swift passage through the thickest congestion of traffic. To us East Enders such preferential treatment seems like the miraculous parting of the Red Sea. We are in the third and last car—the largest and smartest—it belongs to Sir Putney.

We are enmeshed in a block in Mile End Road. A constable on point duty has held us up! Has he failed to recognise the Round Table Conference label on the car? Unbelievable! What an affront!

We laugh at each other's simulated annoyance. What will it be like after to-day, when we have become nobodies again and get no privilege, no Governmental consideration?

Just as we reach Victoria we pass dear Sir Putney. He's making his way on foot to see his chief off. We wave, but he notices nothing, walking Indian fashion, eyes bent to the ground.

9 a.m. How gratifying not to have to spend pennies on platform tickets! Our party has sixty-two packages to convey to Brindisi, but we are quite care-free. How pleasant to be able to ignore one's trappings! The efficient detectives take on all responsibilities—tickets, passports, luggage, everything.

Mr. Gandhi, however, does make one anxious inquiry: "Are the toys all right?" On hearing of their safe disposal he remarks: "They're the only things I'm taking back to India, except what I came with." He is referring to the little woolly animals, coloured candles and chalk drawings the Nursery School children in Bow gave him on his birthday.

The train steams out—the British in the crowd sing "Auld Lang Syne."

"Ah, that's the hymn I like best of all," says Mahadev Desai. "It's worth going a long way to hear that sung."

10.30. At Folkestone the British Movietone is to the fore as we go up the gangway.

11.30 a.m. The French official responsible for Mr. Gandhi is introduced to him by Sergeant Evans. He bows low and inquires whether Mr.

Gandhi would prefer to leave the boat first or last.

"Whichever is most convenient to you," answers Mr. Gandhi.

12.30 p.m. This is a pleasant way to enter France—no Customs to go through, no passports to show, no landing tickets to present. We merely walk on to the platform and find ourselves wondering how long before even that primitive exertion will be rendered unnecessary. The station-master leads us to a fine suite of compartments with huge one-piece windows of the latest pattern.

"But we haven't first-class tickets," says Mr. Gandhi.

The railway official bows, bowing aside all such information as irrelevant. We are ensconced comfortably and left alone.

1 p.m. Journalists press forward—but all the message they get is, "I'm glad to be spending one night on French soil and I shall make the best use possible of it."

Afterwards they question other members of the party.

"Where has Mr. Gandhi been staying in London?"

Our French is not equal to the task of explaining what Kingsley Hall is. We hesitate.

"A Y.M.C.A.?" suggests one Pressman.

"A Cloob?" brightly contributes another.

"A Foyer?" This latter it is deemed eventually to be. (Memo. Must discover what 'Foyer' means and if we are it.)

2 p.m. Gandhi's son Devadas and I have just finished serving out the Indian lunch. Enough was brought in tiffin carriers to last for two days' journeyings—chappaties, curry, pickled lemons, fruit and almond paste. "Having seen something of England," says he, "I wish I could now stay in France and get to know the country. Tell me how you feel towards the French."

"Temperamentally the two peoples are poles asunder," I answer.

"How strange when you live so near each other! Only that short sea passage!"

"Perhaps the difference between us is the more noticeable because we've been dumped down in the world at such close quarters," I venture. "After all, we are in different branches of the Aryan family. Aren't you our cousins as much as they?"

"But where does all this difference come in?" he queried. Devadas is like his father in his unwillingness to leave a conversation until he thoroughly understands what you mean by it—rather a disconcerting habit when one has dashed into talk quite lightly and propounded some theory which may or may not hold water.

So I have to find reasons for my chance remark. I begin to point out the century-old antagonisms between the two peoples; the incompatibility of temper so obvious when crossing the Channel on one's way back to England; at Boulogne the shouting and excitement which transform the most ordinary event into a crisis; the orgy of noise, the buffeting, the waving of arms, the shouting of adjurations, the

thrilled bevy of porters swarming up the gangway into the English boat. I contrast all this with the phlegmatic calm of the British sailors and railway porters.

“Then there’s their patriotism,” I continue, warming to my subject. “It’s something solemn, uplifting, sacred. They do honour to their officials, mayors and magistrates, and uphold their ceremonies in all sincerity.”

“But surely,” begins Devadas, “as to ceremonies —” He was remembering our Lord Mayor’s Show, English dinner-parties, the Buckingham Palace reception.

“Oh, yes,” I respond, accepting his suggestion. “We stand and watch the show, but in the presence of trumpets and scarlet we are always self-conscious, and we generally keep our tongue in our cheek to reassure ourselves.”

3.30 a.m. Arriving at Paris Nord Station is like finding oneself in the midst of one of those lurid film scenes of the Russian Revolution, or of the fall of the Bastille, or some U.F.A. production, with its super-modern staging of engines, sidings, trucks, great erections of steel and glass, sirens insistently proclaiming some warning, men climbing up stacks of giant machinery, looking like bits of mechanism themselves, while artificial light lends everything a sinister appearance.

At Boulogne there had been crowds as soon as we landed, but the station-master, bearded, bowler-hatted and typically French, had evidently empowered his gendarmes to strike awe into the *fac-*

teurs there, and we had been conducted to the train with ceremony and serenity.

At Paris, however, the crowds assail Mr. Gandhi with their welcome; they cover the platforms, climb on the engines and the roofs of trucks, up ladders and high among the station girders. The railwaymen are all smiles—they seem a different species from those who ordinarily look at a tip with such fine dramatic scorn. Blue-bloused workmen are planted at salient points on top of specially erected scaffolding. They are holding torches high above their heads—lit by their own crude naphtha flare, they look unnatural, tense. Photographers emit magnesium flashes from every direction, and these piercing illuminations seem to accentuate the vastness and drabness of the station. The occasion seems fraught with significance. I am swept along, crushed among the excited Parisians. I try to keep behind Sergeant Evans, whose broad back prepares a thoroughfare; the *agents* are outside the battle altogether. Perhaps their cloaked dignity depends on their uniform, which needs to be seen to be felt, and nothing can be seen here but the crowds.

Somewhere in the midst of this sea of humanity, Mr. Gandhi is moving ahead fast, equable and cheery as usual, but wholly cut off from his party. Journalists and enthusiasts have managed to get between him and the guardians of order; ropes and cables attached to cameras and movietone wagons are left trailing over the platform. We have to negotiate our passage over so many obstacles that Sergeant Evans risks a breach of international etiquette, and

with his disarming smile forges ahead and ensconces himself in his accustomed place by the side of Mr. Gandhi.

4 p.m. Outside the iron gates of the station, which clang behind us and hold back the crowd, we have a blessed moment's pause and recover our sense of integrity till another welcoming crowd breaks in upon us. All members of the party are swooped upon by kindly people for immediate transport to a big hotel, where a reception is prepared by the Indians of Paris.

4.30 p.m. The large hall is filled with little tables and a grandiose tea is served from large silver tea-pots of a solidity which is almost forbidding. About twelve people sit at the high table with Mr. Gandhi, and they make lengthy speeches of welcome. One of them, an eminent Hindu doctor, bursts into poetry and song. A very old, almost blind woman, after the addresses of welcome, rises, tall, unbending and majestic, and intones the sacred words "Bande Matarem" as in blessing.

The lengthy introductions at an end, Mr. Gandhi begins to speak. A little ripple of satisfaction breaks over the hall at the first few words.

"Ah! to hear Hindi again!" a Brahmin at my table congratulates himself beneath his breath.

6 p.m. A reception is held at the flat of Mr. Gandhi's hostess for the night, Mme. Guiyesse. It is a tiny, old-fashioned and charming flat, and the influx of visitors threatens to burst its walls as well as its locks. The common staircase is choked with a seething mass of people. From the entrance hall

one hears a struggle outside, a pleading for admittance, an insistent rattling of the handle; a name is at last distinguished by the doorkeeper and the door cautiously opened—an angry, dishevelled person darts in like an exhausted criminal seeking sanctuary. I notice that as soon as an incomer realises he has attained the position of the privileged, he becomes scornful and intolerant of the rabble without, counselling the denial of admittance at every subsequent knock. The tussles outside induce the summoning of an *agent* by 'phone, but his arrival seems to make no difference at all. At length Sergeant Evans volunteers: "Shall I go and see what I can do?"

The grateful doorkeeper accepts his offer.

Sergeant Evans speaks no French, but, enormous and imperturbable, his red face one broad tolerant smile, he shepherds the throng, *agent* and all, down the stairs, and there is a sudden lull, a blessed relief after the protracted hubbub.

Meanwhile, inside the reception-room a bevy of intellectuals is gathered, so many that half of them have to sit on the floor. The room grows stifling, several visitors make long speeches. Mr. Gandhi begins to cough through lack of air, speeches roll on so that it is only just before the allotted hour is over that they have the chance of hearing him answer their questions. Because of the congestion in the flat it takes quite a time to walk the six paces from the reception-room to the supper-room, where eight of us are to refresh ourselves before the public meeting.

As the guests disperse, a man tries to rush the door leading to the private part of the flat. I stop him. Very angry at being thwarted, he discloses his journalistic identity to me. Unimpressed except by his having been admitted under false pretences, I stand between him and the door, denying him entry.

“Have you no consideration for the man? He’s had two meetings and has two more. That’s surely enough between four and eleven o’clock. Come back when the public meeting’s over. There’s to be a special hour for journalists then.” I feel very English and very scornful.

“Two minutes only! Two minutes only!” he demands.

“Can’t you see that everyone wants two minutes? Use common sense,” I retort.

“I’m a friend of the family,” he asserts. Lie number two.

“I represent a syndicate of twelve newspapers,” he continues, and begins to recite a list of many “dailies,” continental and English.

“You’ll see him to-night, then.”

“Ah, but *I* want something very special. I want his answer to four questions I’ve prepared.”

“Mr. Gandhi likes questions,” I relent. “Give me the four, and I’ll see if I can get the answers for you by to-night.”

“Oh! I haven’t got them written out yet. Let me stay here and write them.”

By now I have completely given up Non-Violence, which must be applied to thought as well as action,

but am cleaving quite savagely to Truth. I am full of disgust. Here is our guest whom we have cared for, and whose comfort and health we have considered, for twelve weeks, being nearly torn to pieces in Paris, and now an impudent, lying journalist, masquerading as a friend of the family, clamours for answers to questions he has not even taken the trouble to formulate.

He eyes me narrowly and then enounces his threat.

“ If he won’t see me, I’ll make it worse for him. I can do him harm.”

I fear my expression is murderous as I leave him outside and unsatisfied. In the paper owned by his combine there appears next morning the result of his temper and mine. He out-Winstons Churchill in his reference to Mr. Gandhi’s appearance. He describes him as a “ grande comique ” and a “ tired and disappointed man racked with coughing.”

8 p.m. A huge cinema, crowded with people long before the advertised hour. Large sums have been refused for tickets which could have been sold over and over again. We have to fight to get in to the seats reserved for us. The enthusiasm is tremendous.* A scarlet-uniformed troop of International Girl Scouts deals with the crowds. The heat no one can deal with; it makes collars collapse

* At salient points round the hall movietone apparatus are erected, but Mr. Gandhi will not speak where they are operated, so there is a contest between the organisers of the meeting and the owners of this paraphernalia. They were never given permission to operate, but they forthwith put in a claim for three thousand francs as their estimated loss.

and faces shine with sweat; the emotion is overpowering, more so because of a Royalist demonstration that has recently been held in the city; there are crowds, rather frightening somehow, unlike any I have ever experienced before. In their intensity they give the effect of swaying to and fro, restless, excited. It brings to my mind a mental picture given me over thirty years ago by a cousin of mine. She described a meeting she attended in Paris soon after the first Duma was dissolved—a meeting to protest against the cruelties inflicted by the Czar's Government on the victims of Imperialism. It was a revelation to her, and her description impressed me deeply. For an hour, she said, it was impossible for a speaker to start; they sat, waiting on the platform, caught up in the same emotion that held the vast audience that swayed backwards and forwards to the rhythm of three syllables chanted over and over again—their accusation, terrible in its simplicity, its monotony, its repetition: “Assassins! Assassins! Assassins!”

The Czar triumphed then, and has fallen. Later on the Revolutionaries triumphed, were defeated, divided and then triumphed again. Now they are the oldest and, some say, the most stable government in Europe, unchanged for ten years.

To-day on the platform in front of me sits the newest type of revolutionary, quietly and convincingly giving his message that Truth and Non-Violence are the greatest and most active forces in the Universe and that by their means alone can be overcome insolent might.

10.30 p.m. The great crowd disperses and we go to our respective lodgings.

At 11.30 p.m. photographers turn up outside the flat, just as we are leaving, and ask me politely to let them in, as they have permission to enter.

“From whom?” I inquire.

Their reply, “Mr. Gandhi,” is a sad error and makes me laugh. They go away discomfited until 1 a.m., when they appear again and make so much noise and fuss that eventually the neighbours get together and file a suit against Mr. Gandhi’s hostess for some thousands of francs in compensation for their ruined sleep.

Instructions as to meeting next morning at the station had been defective, and I appeared at the platform of the Gare de Lyon in time to see a happy-faced crowd streaming back from the platform and a bevy of police just relieved of the strain of seeing Mr. Gandhi safely out of Paris.

My passport, my ticket, my luggage and my food were all with the party who had just left the station, also, as money is superfluous on a personally conducted journey such as ours, I had only English silver and notes with me.

How difficult to preserve one’s Internationalist sentiments in a foreign country when the taxi-man insists on double his fare! But how easy to love the foreigner when all that is required is graciously to receive the kindnesses and the privileges accorded! For the situation presented no difficulties to the companion of Mr. Gandhi. All I had to do was to accompany my hostess to the Superintendent’s office,

to keep quiet, which is easy when one is no linguist, and to let the others work out the details. Very soon I was given a signed card endowed with the power of dispensing with passports, tickets and the need of cash, and if I would return in two or three hours the station-master would conduct me to the train. Meanwhile he would get in touch with Mr. Gandhi and I should pick up my passport en route. An Indian in the crowd, a total stranger, handed me some money and departed.

I took a pleasant walk, ate a second breakfast, a proceeding always enjoyable in France, and eventually was led in honour to the train. When a first-class carriage was indicated, I explained that my ticket, wherever it was by now, was for third-class, but that again apparently made no difference.

Henceforth I shall remember the hovering guard who miraculously restored to me my passport and ticket at Laroche and then stood saluting me with obvious pride and pleasure, the station-master who summoned his minions from all points of the compass to expedite my journey, the super-charming waiter who provided me with nourishment and newspapers and even filled my fountain pen.

Henceforth *Vive la France!*

CHAPTER XVI

SWITZERLAND ENTERTAINS HIM

THE Tyrolese village scene in the “White Horse Inn,” at the Coliseum, where the Austrian Emperor’s visit sets the whole population a-flutter, brought to my mind the little Swiss village on the shore of Lake Geneva and its way of welcoming Mr. Gandhi. In the play the villagers troop up to the inn before breakfast, rich and poor, young and old, to serenade their honoured guest, and the burly Mayor, whose singing has certainly lacked no fervour, is highly gratified when his Majesty comes out on his bedroom balcony to thank his people and assure them that never in his life has he heard such singing as theirs.

We stayed five days at Villeneuve. We filled M. Romain Rolland’s two little villas and overflowed into the hotel by the lakeside, and wherever we went groups of children or villagers or visitors seemed to be waiting—to sing, to play the violin, to give him flowers or to ask him questions.

An old man, who lived in a diminutive sort of summer-house, where he sold postcards, chocolates and cold drinks, was always on the look-out for him; every time I passed, he informed me that he had a “petit bouquet” for “le mahatma”; if I would

arrange for him to stop and receive it, he would show him his birds also.

“ See, madame, for yourself how friendly they are,” he said on one occasion, taking me into his twelve-foot-square garden. He commenced to whistle, and the birds came flying up from the trees and bushes of the near-by embankment, surrounding us with their fluttering and song.

“ Mr. Gandhi will like these, I know,” he assured me.

The village children kept serenading their honoured guest whenever they got the chance, and that was fairly often. A fiddler used to stand half-way up the stairs of the villa and make music while he ate his breakfast. The village male voice choir sang their tuneful best for him. Once or twice we had the perfect joy of hearing M. Rolland interpret Beethoven at the piano.

The huge Chillon Hotel just below the villas has been recently converted into a school for English and American boys, and on the night of Mr. Gandhi’s arrival, strains of “ Rule Britannia ” were to be heard as he passed the grounds. Next day the boys waited about in the field outside the garden gate, wanting his autograph and inviting him to address the school.

M. Rolland and Mr. Gandhi had never met; they cannot even speak the same language; M. Rolland is a literary giant, musician, historian, playwright, novelist and recluse. His great three-volume work, “ Jean Christopher,” provides the key to his personality, and I suppose his studies of Beethoven

are valued all over the world. During the war it was difficult for a Frenchman who was also a thinker and a prophet to live in France. His book, "Above the Battle," did not fit in with the war aims, published or secret, of the Allies. He had to leave France, and he chose Switzerland for his home. When he brought out his book "Mahatma Gandhi," the Indian leader became known wherever culture flourished. That was in 1920, and ever since the two have been friends and correspondents and have longed to see each other "en chair et en os."

M. Rolland unfortunately is an invalid, and could only receive his guest upstairs in his bedroom. I think we caught something of the elation and joy of the two great friends when after their long time of communion together we were invited in and presented to our host. That part of the wall space of the little sunlit room which is not hidden by books shows fine studies of the heads of those M. Rolland loves to honour—Goethe, Beethoven, Tolstoi, Gorki, Gandhi, Tagore and Einstein.

In each room of both villas there are books in abundance. I found it was quite a difficult matter to force oneself to extinguish the light in order to sleep at night. Tauchnitz novels were ranged on the shelves by my door; a French translation of Virginia Woolf's "Orlando" made my undressing an over-lengthy process; the monthly numbers extending over three years, of a publication, called "Materials for the Study of Calamities," were at my feet; but these gruesome articles were not conducive to slumber. To end the day in peace I picked up

the book I found lying about in the bathroom. Bapu had been carrying it with him everywhere lately—"The Little Bible," a small, well-printed book including the finest excerpts. I opened it at one of the gospels, but the next thing I knew was awaking in the glare of electric light. I turned the switch; the stars gazed in from behind the mountains, enormous and friendly, and I fell asleep.

At 5.30 Mira awakened me. I dressed, put Bapu's book back into the bathroom, and crept downstairs quietly enough not to disturb the three men, Mahadev, Pieralal and Devadas, who were sleeping on the floor of one of the downstair rooms.

I heard men's voices from the front room, however, and to my joy found M. Privat had come for the morning walk with Pierre Ceresole. Bapu had been wanting to meet M. Ceresole ever since he had landed at Marseilles in September, especially perhaps because he had been told: "You'll have to seek him out, then, for he never thrusts himself forward." Even a telegram which reached M. Ceresole as he was leaving Wales for Switzerland failed to divert him to Bow in his passage through London.

"But why should I take up his time? He has more important things to do," was the characteristic reply of this leader of men.

Even now that they were living within a few miles of one another, and the morning walk was open to all comers, he had to be dragged to it, as it were, by his friend. Perhaps it is these incurably humble-minded people who keep the world sane. How meretricious seem our little posturings and egocentric babblings

compared with their quiet, steady, skilled workmanship! Pierre belongs to one of the oldest governing families in Switzerland ; he was nurtured in strictly military, aristocratic traditions, and was expected to carry on the tenure of high office in the State, but during the war he broke away from the established order of things.

Our little party of five made its way by starlight through the garden, across the field, down the winding lane, over the stream and up the stony mountain path.

“ Tell me all about your movement, M. Ceresole. I’ve heard so much of it,” said Bapu.

So Pierre began. He told of the village schoolmaster who during the war showed “ us Swiss people the way ” by refusing, in the name of Christ, any longer to serve his three months as a conscript, and as a result was put in a lunatic asylum, then in prison ; how he soon took the same line himself, and many others followed ; how they still go to prison each year for refusing military service ; how they all desire to *give* service, but service of a different kind—citizen service, service for the living, for the suffering and oppressed of any nation in any part of the world. He told of a group of men, including French, German, Swiss and British, organised to build up voluntarily the shattered villages of post-war Northern France, a group which worked under a self-imposed discipline, stricter than military, for many months each year ; how they helped to restore a village in Austria destroyed by avalanches and took on each year some fresh constructive task ;

how this last summer they worked in Bryn Mawr, South Wales, and with the co-operation of unemployed miners, brought new hope into the whole neighbourhood; how they observed military discipline under Colonel Ceresole, Pierre's brother; how they were trying to get their work recognised by the State as an alternative to conscript service; how year by year a Bill legalising this is presented to the Swiss Parliament, and by now has the approval of twenty-five per cent. of the members.

Although Bapu had heard most of all this while he was in England, he listened intently and for a longer time than ever before on a morning walk. He always used to do most of the talking himself, except when I set out purposely on some story about Bow people's lives or our pacifist experiences in wartime or various adventures we had made in voluntary poverty. He never interrupted me; perhaps it was politeness because he was my guest, but I rather think he accepted my chatter as a species of entertainment. I used to prattle on at length, determined to keep him quiet and his mind relaxed. He always did listen, however, for if a month later I referred to any person a second time he used to comment: "I remember, you told me about her before."

I suppose Pierre must have talked for some five minutes before Bapu interrupted.

He had mighty issues to raise, fundamental and pre-existent to the activities undertaken by Pierre's group.

"Now let me put something to you," he said. "Oughtn't it to be a more continuous fight? Why

only make a yearly attack on war, merely because conscripts are called up yearly? You are involved every day of your life in war; so long as you accept privileges from the State, so long are you held back by it."

Pierre was only too glad to be relieved of the unwelcome job of talking about himself, and from now on scarcely made more than an occasional interjection, brief query or exclamation of assent.

"I did not think like this in 1914," continued Bapu. "Then I wanted to be the perfect citizen, so I put myself unreservedly at the disposal of the British Government. I believed they were protecting my country from tyranny, therefore I felt I had to help them as wholeheartedly as any Briton. I was asked to do Red Cross work. I said to myself, 'That is lovely,' for I did not want to kill, but I laid no unction to my soul on that account. I could not flatter myself that Red Cross work was less than killing. It has precisely the same effect in wartime, in that it releases other men to kill. If they'd given me a rifle, I would have used it when they'd shown me how and trained me to it. I'd have certainly used it, unless I'd been suddenly paralysed, as sometimes has happened to me when about to do something wrong.

"I thought serving wholeheartedly in the war was the right way to gain my country's freedom. Before that, while I was in South Africa, the Zulu rebellion broke out. My sympathies were with the Zulus. I would have liked to help them, but I had not the power then to do anything for them.

I was not strong enough, not disciplined enough, not experienced enough. I saw no way to help. I had no word to give. What could I do? I thought I would identify myself with the British Government system; then I should be able to make my witness through the system, in order to set right what was wrong in it. I put myself at the disposal of the Government there and I was set to stretcher-bearing. That suited me splendidly. I hoped I should have to tend the wounded Zulus. The Chief Medical Officer was a humanitarian, and when I told him I'd rather tend the wounded Zulus than any others, he exclaimed, 'This is an answer to prayer.' You see, the Zulu prisoners had been beaten and their wounds and stripes were festering, and the others did not want to attend to them. So I nursed them night and day. They were kept behind bars, and the colonial soldiers used to watch us from outside as we worked, jeering at us for lavishing care on 'niggers.' They used to shout through the bars, scoffing and threatening. 'Why don't you let 'em die? Rebels! Niggers!' It was terrible the way that rebellion was quelled. The soldiers would attack unarmed men. That ought to have taught me a lesson, but even after that, you see, I made further attempts to remain a part of the British State system. I tried to work out my ideals from within the State, but it was no good. I learnt much from the endeavour, however. After serving the State in South Africa, I was still powerless to influence it on behalf of the Zulus. And after serving the Empire throughout the war,

recruiting, which I held to be my duty, and undertaking any sort of service they put upon me, I found myself still powerless at the end of it all to win my country's freedom. So I could not co-operate with the State any longer."

"I can see that, Mr. Gandhi," commented Pierre, "when the State or the Government is an alien one. But it's not the same for us in Europe. It is only right and natural for any one to stand out against an alien government, but if it's your own, and you know, bad as it may be, it's the fruit of centuries of effort, patient, splendid effort and self-sacrifice, and if it has developed little by little, as one generation after another has seen more light, it's quite a different thing."

"The State," Bapu replied, "is so organised that man becomes helpless to strike out a new path inside its machinery. He cannot produce an impression upon it. You are shackled. I'd like to see you outside the State machinery. I wish Muriel here would lead a movement of men and women who'd refuse to take the dole. They would volunteer to work, but would refuse charity. It's bad for the rich to be able to soothe their consciences by securing to the unemployed a few shillings a week. What a cheap, easily bought sop! They take refuge in it and forget the crying injustice, the terrible contrasts between luxury and want. The suffering of such a band of volunteers would not be in vain. Their Non-Violence would have a tremendous effect. It would witness everywhere for Truth. People would have to face the facts. They could not evade

them as they do now. When people, simple, humble people, begin to suffer for a cause it means purification. Their victory must follow eventually."

"But, Mr. Gandhi," said Pierre, very gravely, "I'm afraid our people in Europe are not like yours in India. I'm afraid they're not ready for such acts as these."

There was a pause, and then, in a low and infinitely gentle voice, as though sorry for the terrific rebuke he was implying, Bapu said: "Are you sure it's *the people* who are not ready, M. Ceresole?"

"Oh," exclaimed Pierre, and we were all silent, accepting the challenge. "I see what you mean. You're right. It's we who are failing. It's leadership we lack. Is that what you mean?"

In the same small voice Bapu answered: "I must confess, M. Ceresole, I do not seem to have come across leaders in Europe—not of the sort that the times call for."

"Tell us what qualities you think a leader for this age would need," Pierre urged him.

"Realisation of God every minute of the twenty-four hours," announced Mr. Gandhi.

"And if a man asked, 'What do you mean by God?'"

"I would answer, 'Truth is God, and the way to find him is Non-Violence.' A leader must have complete mastery over himself. Anger must be banished, and fear and falsehood. You must lose yourself. You must not please yourself either with food or sex pleasures. Thus purified, you get power.

It's not your own, it's God's. Wherein does my strength lie? What am I? A boy of fifteen could fell me with a blow. I am nothing, but I have become detached from fear and desire, so that I know God's power. I tell you, if all the world denied God, I should be His sole witness. It is a continual miracle to me.

“Your religion is young yet. Jesus caught a breath of wind from Asia and gave it to the world. It has been diluted in the West. You incorporated it into a system alien to it. That's why I call myself not Christian, because I do not hold with the systems you've set up, based on might. India's contribution to the world is to show this fallacy. The slopes of the Himalayas are white with the bones of our Rishis, who have given their lives to prayer, study and research. They have been trying for centuries to wrest the secrets of God from Him, and what they tell us is: ‘Truth is God, and the way to Him is Non-Violence.’

“While I was in Yeravda jail I studied with reverence all the great religions. Even Islam is really a religion of peace. The word means peace. But it's a young religion, too. Mahomet used to get away alone for days at a time, wrestling with God for more truth. When he came back he would share what he'd found. Sometimes he could not get an answer from God to his questions. Then he would ask Omar's advice. Once he said: ‘Shall it be peace or war, Omar, with these enemies of ours?’ Omar answered, ‘I do not know. Ask God.’ ‘You fool,’ said Mahomet. ‘Do you think I haven't?’

Should I have asked you, if I could have got the answer from God? ’ ”

When later in the day I chipped Bapu for having talked so much, he laughed at the recollection. “ This morning? A glorious walk! I’ve never done that before. I completely unburdened myself of all that was on my mind. It was that young man who made me. He is a splendid fellow.”

“ Oh, Bapu,” I laughed, “ how can you say so? He hardly spoke at all. You cut in almost at once, as you always do.”

“ No, it was he. His being there made me talk like that. He’s one of the finest men I’ve met. I don’t need to listen long. I can get to know people without that. I suppose it’s having met such thousands, I don’t know.”

While Mr. Gandhi was in Switzerland, great crowds of people had opportunity of hearing him speak. In Lausanne the public meeting was held in a big church. Its organ pealed out to the citizens, who filled the streets to the point of embarrassment, but Mr. Gandhi likes people, and he refused to come by car. Those few hundred yards to the church door took a long time to cover. As he entered, a violinist met him and preceded him with music up the aisle, while the whole audience rose to their feet in welcome.

“ Mahatma Gandhi,” the Chairman began, “ how happy we are to have you in our town! We see in you the leader of Young India, who has brought her to freedom. We in Europe are afraid—afraid of

the unknown, afraid of poverty, afraid of prison and of suffering. But you love these things. You take them gladly. You are not afraid. We know the Sermon on the Mount by heart. You know it and live it. We believe in God and in the Prince of Peace, but we feel humble before you."

Mr. Gandhi replied: "You wish to know something about the means we have adopted for vindicating our independence. History tells how a subject race has always resorted to arms in order to get free, but we have kept scrupulously to non-violent means. We seem to have succeeded in attaining our goal. I know it is still only an experiment. I cannot claim absolute success, but I suggest that it has gone far enough to justify your studying the experiment. If it proves successful, that is India's contribution to World Peace.

"I have to say the same to you as I did to the people of Paris," he continued; "I observe throughout the West a sickness of heart. You seem to be tired of the military burden under which Europe is groaning, and also tired of the prospect of shedding the blood of your fellow-men. The last war, falsely called great, has taught you and humanity many a rich lesson. It taught you some surprising things about human nature. You also found that no fraud, no lies, no deceit was considered too bad to use in order to win the war; no cruelty was considered too great; there were no unfair ways and means for encompassing the destruction of your so-called enemy. Suddenly, as in a flash, the friends of your youth became enemies, no home was safe, nothing spared.

This civilisation of the West was weighed in the balance and found wanting.

“Now most nations are on the brink of insolvency, a direct result of war. There is material bankruptcy and moral bankruptcy. We are too near as yet to measure its frightful consequences. Nor is the evil confined to the boundaries of Europe. It has travelled to Asia. Everything seems to be topsy-turvy. A message of hope seems to be coming over from India. India is trying to regain her liberty by means of Non-Violence and Truth. For eleven years she has been endeavouring to follow this means. Tens of thousands of men and women have taken part in this pacific movement. If millions of people can regain liberty without shedding a drop of blood, it will be a great lesson for the whole world. You have been trying to discover a moral equivalent for war. Perhaps India’s method is that.

“It is too early yet to say anything with perfect confidence, but my plea to you is to study the situation there. Study it, if you like, as a prejudiced, biased friend, but study it with criticism as students. Study it with utter impartiality. If at the end you find it is honest, then, but not till then, throw yourself into the movement. You can help to mould public opinion in Europe and in the world until it becomes an irresistible force. This method of Non-Violence depends on public opinion, it speaks for suffering people everywhere.

“If the rival powers had wanted a passage through Switzerland they would have fought Switzerland also. But it would be cowardly if you were to

allow a foreign army to pass through your neutral country that it might attack another power. Had I been a citizen of Switzerland or President of the Federal State, I would have invited every citizen to refuse all supplies to invading armies, to re-enact Thermopylæ and build a living wall of women and children and invite the invading armies to walk over their bodies. Do you say that is beyond endurance? It is not. Last year we showed that such things can be done. Women stood in mass formation, breast forward, without flinching. In Peshawar thousands of men withstood a shower of bullets. Imagine such men and women standing in front of an army wanting a passage through your country. Perhaps the armies would have marched. Then you would have won your victory, for no army would be able to repeat that experiment. Non-violence is not and never has been the weapon of the weak. It is the weapon of the stoutest heart."

Addressing the women, Mr. Gandhi said: "I do not know if I have the courage to give the message for the women of Europe that you asked for. If I am to do so without incurring their wrath, I would direct their steps to the women of India, who rose in one mass last year; and I really believe that if Europe will drink in the lesson of non-violence it will do so through its women. The beauty of non-violent war is that women can play the same part in it as men. In a violent war the women have no such privilege, but the Indian women played a more effective part in our last non-violent war than the men. The reason is simple. Non-violent war calls into

play suffering to the largest extent, and who can suffer more purely and nobly than women? The women in India tore down the purdah and came forward to work for the nation. They saw that the country demanded something more than their looking after its homes. They manufactured contraband salt, they picketed foreign cloth shops and liquor shops, they tried to wean both the seller and the customer from both. At late hours in the night they pursued the drunkards to their dens, with courage and charity in their hearts. They marched to jails and they sustained lathi blows as few men did. If the women of the West will try to vie with men in becoming brutes, they have no lesson to learn from the women of India. They will have to cease taking delight in sending their husbands and sons to kill people and in congratulating them on their valour."

Following his usual custom, Mr. Gandhi then invited questions, a selection of which follows.

Q. What do you think of the Red Cross Society?

A. The Red Cross should cease to think of war and giving relief in war, and turn their thoughts to giving relief without war. If war had no courage, no honour, no splendour behind it, it would soon be conquered. There are many millions of prisoners of passion and millions of wrecked homes, therefore the non-violent societies of to-morrow will have plenty of work if they undertake service. May Switzerland lead the way in that branch of service!

Q. If India, after having gained freedom from

Great Britain, entered into a war, what would happen to her?

A. She could not enter into war if she had gained her freedom through non-violent means.

Q. We hoped to have Professor Einstein here, but unfortunately he had to go to America. We want to know what Mr. Gandhi thinks of Einstein's appeal to people to go to jail rather than to do their term of military service. He stated that if two per cent. of the peoples of the world responded to his appeal, militarism could have no further power in the world.

A. I would be filled with delight if people responded to Mr. Einstein's appeal. If it is possible to say this of such a great man as Einstein, I might be tempted to say that he has stolen this method from me. But I believe that to refuse military service when your time comes to be called to the colours is starting too late. For every one person serving in the army physically fit and young, there are hundreds living at home who are equally responsible for the crime of war. You must non-co-operate by denying yourself the privileges the State offers. We in India found that the State made roads, built schools, equipped railways, set up post offices; missionaries built hospitals in the wake of the British; and all these good things were built under the shadow of the bayonet. Palatial High Courts were set up, but we had to pay for them. I must deny myself the privileges that are offered by the State. I must withdraw from the schools. I must not support the Courts of Justices by taking my quarrels there.

I must submit to voluntary arbitration courts. I must give up any title or award that I have received. It would be hooliganism to accept all these privileges and then to non-co-operate with the State by non-payment of taxes. You must renounce your privileges. It took us ten years to build up our movement. In 1920 we began repudiating the privileges offered us, but it was not till 1930 that we inaugurated non-payment of taxes. Besides, there is another aspect: I cannot let India be a partner to the exploitation of Africa. Your states are so organised as to prey on Africa, China, India. If India ever began to exploit other nations I should have to exile myself, but where could I go? I should have to jump into the sea. Thus selfishly I am trying this experiment of non-violence, for of course I do not want to have to commit suicide.

Q. How will workers ever obtain justice without violence while capitalists use force against them?

A. That is the old law, the law of the jungle, blow against blow. I am trying a human experiment in order to be rid of the jungle law. I am supposed to be chief adviser of the Labour Textile Union in Ahmadabad. Through this we have been endeavouring to enforce non-violence in questions between Capitalist and Labour. Therefore my answer is based on experience. Labour can always vindicate itself if sufficiently united and self-sacrificing.

Q. A Geneva journal stated that you, Mr. Gandhi, said, 'The masses will have to turn to terrorism if success does not follow their present non-violent programme.' Did you say that?

A. Never. And I must point out that Non-Violence is not a mere quality, but a fundamental creed. I ever pray to God that He would give me strength to lay down my life rather than countenance any sort of violence.

Q. What do you think of the League of Nations?

A. It is expected to perform wonders, to replace war, to arbitrate in its own power between nations that are embroiled in differences. But it lacks the necessary sanctions. It depends on the goodwill of the nations concerned. The means we have adopted supply the necessary sanctions.

Q. Why do you ask Switzerland, a small neutral non-aggressive state, to disarm?

A. Because from your neutral ground I know that I am speaking to all the Powers of Europe. Secondly, Switzerland, just because she is neutral and non-aggressive, does not need this army. Seeing you attract people of all nations, because you occupy this vantage ground, is it not better for you to give the whole world a lesson in disarmament and show that you are brave enough to do without arms?

Q. Why do you ignore the sacred traditions of military development? Don't you know that the mere presence of the Swiss Army on the frontiers saved us from the horrors of the last war?

A. A double ignorance underlies this question. The questioner seems to think that without soldiery you would have no self-sacrifice, and I must tell him that non-violence is made of sterner stuff than soldiery. With Non-Violence you are in another

conscription of an even severer type. You must have endurance and defiance of death, a harder labour, not an agreeable ease. You will not be absolved from the duty of saving your homes, but even the women and children will be taking part in that duty. Everything is easy as soon as you learn the lesson of giving your own life for the sake of others.

Q. Which is the greater: love of God or love of man?

A. They are the same. If a conflict arises between these two loves, it shows that there is some conflict in the man himself, and he must look within.

Q. Why don't you want to place your movement under God's inspiration?

A. Oh! oh! The questioner cannot have studied the movement. The movement has never been outside the inspiration of God. Apart from that inspiration, I regard myself as utterly unfit to conduct a movement of this world character. I have never considered myself responsible for any of the achievements of this movement, but I consider myself always responsible for any weakness to be found in it, because I am a very weak instrument in the hands of God. I did not go in search of the movement ; it came to me, so it seemed, direct from God. Without immovable faith in God direction of such a movement is utterly impossible."

CHAPTER XVII

ITALY ENTERTAINS HIM

WHEREVER we have travelled in Switzerland a resplendent, shiny, new third-class carriage has been put at our disposal, and as we approach the Italian frontier there is much speculation among our Swiss fellow-voyagers as to whether the Italian Government's offer of free first-class transport for the whole party will materialise.

“ But why shouldn't it, considering they asked if they might provide it? ” asks Mr. Gandhi pertinently, and retires from the conversation, leaving the Swiss Anti-Fascists to prophesy a fracas to their heart's content.

Bapu inquires if these railways are State-owned. The Swiss friends tell him a railway story. One of the French privately-owned lines had to keep paying out compensation claims for accidents. They instituted an inquiry, at which experts told them that if they modernised the railway by changing their lighting from gas to electricity most of the accidents would be averted. The Board of Directors met, listened to the advisers, talked a lot themselves, and eventually put a question: “ Which costs more, the estimated expenditure for installing electricity

or the compensation claims?" The comparison was made and the answer given: "The installation of electricity." That settled it. Without further consideration things were left *in statu quo*.

Conversation is intermittent because of the glorious views on each side of the train. A man comes to tell Bapu that he is starting the manufacture of leather sandals made from cows that have died a natural death. The justification of killing an animal in self-defence is mooted. Bapu's opinion is asked. "I would rather die than kill any creature," he says, and enunciates again the principle that "all life is holy."

Is that sane? Is a snake's life as important as a man's? Nevertheless one must own that these people who recognise God in the lowliest creatures do not seem to be hurt by them. Poisonous snakes have passed by Bapu, even gliding over him on occasion in Africa. He says it is fear that excites attack—your own fear or the creature's fear. But suppose you frighten a snake inadvertently, unintentionally hurt it? It will bite then, and a bite means death. We put this to Bapu.

"It very rarely happens," he says. "The risk is not so great as your risk of being killed in one of your motor accidents."

Our removal from the Swiss train to the Italian at Milan, is conducted with tremendous verve and ceremony, and in spite of the late hour a shouting, cheering crowd watches every movement. Gandhi refuses to see journalists, so they all try to make friends with different members of the party. I am

mistaken for Mrs. Naidu, and Reuter's man evidently thinks I may be useful, detached as I am from the others, on the platform alone. So, when the special carriage suddenly moves off, he seizes my arm and pilots me excitedly across the lines to the place to which it is being shunted, explaining to me effusively how delighted I am undoubtedly going to be to meet his colleague at Rome, a young lady journalist who will be at the station to welcome us. But my heart is set wholly on the acquisition of a cup of coffee, and this man seems singularly obtuse. If he were to lead me to a restaurant and provide me with something hot, I would answer any question he liked to ask. But he seems to want to hover near the train, and presently we move away, leaving him devoid of news.

Each of us now owns half a compartment, and as we travel on, so comfortable is our sleep that several miss the 3 a.m. prayers. I awake early, however, wash, dress and from the windows survey the wide, level stretches of country that make so fitting an introduction to Rome.

Thirty years previously I approached the city by this route at night, a schoolgirl tasting foreign travel for the first time. I gaze out this morning in the cold light of dawn, and little seems changed. Set against the wide, level horizons, a cemetery appears, with its little lighted lamp on every tomb.

Civita Vecchia at last! The name still thrills, though now it has a new association of ideas for me. Near here Count Tolstoi's eldest daughter has

lived since her second marriage. Her husband, Signor Albertini, is the owner of the leading Italian newspaper, and he has restored an old palace to be their home.

8 a.m. At Rome we are to be met by an old friend of Romain Rolland, General Moris, but the train arrives early, so we sit together in Mr. Gandhi's compartment, awaiting our host.

The movietones grunt, journalists struggle, people cheer, and Mr. Gandhi smiles. The dashing young lady journalist breaks into our midst, beautifully dressed, wearing a wonderful smile, as of an old friend long awaited and yearned after. But Mr. Gandhi is giving himself a holiday from newspapers while in Italy, and she retires.*

There have been a great many un-uniformed Fascists on the train during our journey, keeping a watch on us, but we are now given an official welcome. The Minister for Public Instruction is presented to Mr. Gandhi. It is refreshing to see such a youthful and virile-looking person bearing high office.

There is another stir. General Moris has arrived. He takes his three guests home, while the rest of us find our hotel in the centre of the city.

Our programme is sight-seeing until we shall foregather in General Moris' house at 6 p.m. Bapu

* Was it in revenge for this that they forthwith cabled to London the pernicious statement that Mr. Gandhi gave them an interview in which he said that "he was returning to India to restart the struggle against England, and that the boycott would now be a powerful means of rendering more acute the British crisis"?

wants to see the Pope and the Duce, but neither appointment is certain.

Two of us go to St. Peter's. We want to say our prayers there. We roam round the tremendous place, looking out for the quiet corner we need, where, the world forgot, our thought and aspiration can become worship; where, facing Reality, we can become one with God. There are glittering, twisted, brass pillars; there are replicas of vast pictures, pricked out in mosaic, *objets d'art* by the metre. There is lacework and gilt; there are statues sickly with sentimentality, carved or painted figures of men and women who doubtless were fine characters and well worth our study, our esteem and our emulation, but these meticulous artists, unskilled and shallow as they are, have been incapable of portraying their strength and sanity; they could only wrack their features, make them fling out exclamatory hands; no restraint, no depth, no spirit is manifest to my friend or to me in the whole cathedral. Everything that is added to it seems to impoverish it. Pride, ugliness and worldliness seem enshrined there. We cannot find the dignity and simplicity associated with New Testament characters.

We go out into the Piazza for our prayers. There the sun shines through the sprays of water from a fountain, and seated on its stone rim we find ourselves in company with an old man and his great-grandchild. It's quite easy to pray now.

Six o'clock approaches. What fun it would be to see il Duce and Bapu together! Will they

have found anything in common? We shall soon hear.

“Monte Mario,” we tell the chauffeur in happy ignorance of the more detailed whereabouts of Villa Moris. The sun sets as we cross the Tiber; as we speed uphill the twilight deepens. Again and again the chauffeur has to stop to inquire the way. Soon the road becomes lonely; rough fields surround us; the lane only allows a single track, and hedges on each side keep us in the dark. A sudden turn and a carabiniere is discernible leaning on his motor-cycle and watching. That ought to mean that we are somewhere near. The road twists and comes to an end, and we find ourselves in a large square courtyard in front of a farmhouse. A side door opens, and a bent old labourer emerges and bolts across the path. From another door out troops the family, mother, father, two boys and a girl.

“They will show the way, of course,” they assure us. “The campagna is wide and it is easy to lose oneself in the dark.”

Delightedly we climb the hill again, and this time make a successful entry into Villa Moris. A long drive leads to an old square house guarded by ancient fir trees. From two sides of it the garden slopes away into fields which lose themselves in the grey olive-clad campagna.

General Moris is tall, white-haired, very gentle in manner, humble in spirit. He served in the Air Force and was a pioneer of flying. It was he who long ago presented the Italian Government

with its first aeroplane. Bleriot and the Wright brothers came over in those days to Italy to get information from him. He lives retired on Monte Mario, the kindest of men. Signora Moris and the friend who makes her home with them, are of the same sort of character, serene, gentle, gracious, good-all-through. Their quiet house is now to be inundated with visitors, but in the midst of the constant ebb and flow of officers, notables and royalty, there is always utter serenity, the sort of peace that goes deep down into the spirit of those who come into its atmosphere.

At one end of the drawing-room Gandhi squats near the fire, spinning, and we exchange news until prayer-time. He is sorry the Pope could not see him, but he has enjoyed visiting Signor Mussolini. Mira and Mahadev accompanied him. They were all interested in the tremendous length of the great hall up which guests of the Duce have to walk—an excruciating experience for the self-conscious—until they reach the table at one end where he sits, in stately eminence. A far lengthier approach, however, would be powerless to perturb the rhythmic movement of a Brahmin's measured tread, and for these visitors, Signor Mussolini left his dignified seat and came half-way down the hall to meet them, and when, after half an hour, the interview ended, he actually accompanied them as far as the door.

Gandhi is enthusiastic about the Vatican galleries, which were opened for him specially; their art treasure interested him greatly; he had the long, echoing, empty corridors to himself. The Sistine

Chapel held him rapt in awe and wonder. "I saw a figure of Christ there," he says. "It was wonderful. I couldn't tear myself away. The tears sprang to my eyes as I gazed."

Six o'clock strikes. Prayer-time. Many of the visitors who have already paid their respects to him have been waiting in the other room for this moment, along with various disappointed journalists who are not allowed in.

There is no veto against their attending prayers, however, so the whole floor-space of the great room is occupied. The lights go out, and in the gracious, homely glow of the wood fire, Devadas leads the devotions. Soon the rest join in, chanting and praying.

"Now will someone put on the lights, please?" says Bapu at the end, in his quiet, clear and characteristically matter-of-fact tone.

The visitors depart and we sit down to dinner, a little party of six. It is a fascinating dining-room. The table, huge as it is, occupies only one corner of the room; it seems almost an irrelevance, an after-thought. An ancient fellow waits on us whose whole life has been spent with the General and whose family is content to share in this service. On the other side of the great square pillar, on the floor among the shadows, lies a life-size marble figure as though asleep. One soon gets accustomed to its presence, but at one's first glance, through an open door, when the light within is dim, it has a weird effect.

When we return the next morning Bapu has not

yet come back from sight-seeing. Each of us having our own idea of what he must not miss, had pressed our advice upon him. Our Roman Catholic friend had urged St. Peter's; I the Forum; the Duce had sent up a special messenger with a long typed list of what he thought he ought to see—the latest clinics, hospitals, housing schemes, schools. He had clear ideas of his own, however, and the friendship with Dr. Montessori formed in London was renewed in a visit to her Roman school that morning.

As soon as lunch is over, a spate of visitors sets in. He spins as he talks with them. The one who interests me most, is Signora Albertini, Tolstoi's daughter. She is old, vigorous, matter-of-fact, strong-featured, of kindly, homely countenance. She wastes no time in preliminaries, pulls her chair up close to his wheel and begins: "*I am* glad to meet you, Mr. Gandhi."

"And I you!" His smiling eyes beam through his large steel spectacles.

"My father thought so much of you, you know."

"I greatly valued his letters. Was it you, I wonder, or your sister who wrote them for him?"

"All of his daughters helped him in everything."

The talk becomes intimate. Sentences stand out in my memory.

"My father used to say the only people he couldn't understand were the Tolstoyans. He didn't want people to follow him; he wanted them to practise non-violence. It's the only way. . . . We owned the land and we loved it and the people who lived by it. . . . Queer that such a practical programme

as yours and his should earn for you both the epithets of dreamer, simpleton, fool. . . . How did you find the English, Mr. Gandhi?" She bends forward as she inquires, fixing her gaze on him, intent on his reply.

"I had a lovely time there. I met splendid people," he replies.

"Ah!" she exclaims, leaning back in her chair as though deeply satisfied. "I am glad. I hoped you would. I find the English honest and impartial."

Bapu ponders a moment, then agrees. "Yes, I think they are—honest and impartial."

"And do you know how they come by those two qualities in so marked a degree?" she continues. "It's because of their independence of spirit."

"They certainly have great independence of spirit. That is noticeable."

Meanwhile I try to flatten myself against the wall, there where I am sitting close to the fire. I do not want them to realise how my British heart, the only one in the house, is swelling with pride, or they might cease talking like this, for Bapu never lets himself give compliments or praise. He goes on, however: "I found the working people very quick to understand and intelligent, both in Lancashire and in East London. In fact I think their minds grasped Indian aspirations better than the officials at the India Office. The great ones often hear, but will not listen. The poor understand."

Suddenly there is a perceptible stir. The tall, monocled, erect, blue-uniformed figure of General Artuzzi, who is acting as gentleman-usher for his

old friend General Moris, communicates with Mr. Gandhi. Royalty is about to arrive. The room is cleared to make way for the younger daughter of the King, Princess Maria. She sits down opposite Bapu, but conversation is a little difficult at first because of the language. They smile at each other over his wheel and the Princess sends her lady-in-waiting for a big basket to present to him.

“They are Indian figs,” she says. “I’ve brought them for your journey to Brindisi to-night.”

Bapu is delighted and inspects the daintily packed fruit. He thanks her. “But they are not figs,” he adds, with his passion for accuracy.

“Oh, yes; Fichi d’India,” she assures him.

But the vow of truth cannot be broken even for a charming young princess.

“What we call figs are not like this,” he argues. “But whether they are figs or not,” and he looks up at her with the intuitive understanding that he has for all young things, “they will taste just as sweet on the journey, whatever their name. Thank you.”

“Her Majesty the Queen packed them for you herself,” adds the black-clothed lady-in-waiting.

“It was very kind of her,” says Bapu.

After a little more talk the Princess rises, shakes hands and says: “Good-bye. God bless you.”

It is time now for Bapu to start out again.

I feel no inclination to go down to Rome this afternoon. I want quiet to write in. Besides, the view from Monte Mario is splendid, the weather glorious, and I want to explore the garden of Villa

Moris. A peaceful lonely afternoon is clearly indicated. But Villa Moris cannot maintain its genius for peace and serenity this week-end; even on a Sunday afternoon. People keep arriving. The house gets overfull. One cannot escape conversation. I slip out into the garden. Round the back door, blue-cloaked carabinieri are stationed, so I wander away on the other side of the house. December is not the best time for a garden, but against this blue Italian sky the barest branches of tree or shrub seem miracles of grace.

Rustic steps lead down the garden between flower-beds. I keep stopping in my descent to enjoy the distance. Over Rome to one's left lies a haze, mercifully blotting out the sight of activity. To the right the campagna rolls away, undulating till it reaches the far hills on the horizon. Behind and above me is the comfortable stolidity of the white, square villa, backed by a group of fine old firs. Behind the greenhouse, blue smoke lazily curls its way upwards from a pile of rubbish.

It is good to be alone. I sniff the air appreciatively. No one else wants to come out, so in this loneliness I stand and stare to my heart's content.

The bonfire crackles behind me—probably someone is shovelling more rubbish on. Close to it a splash of the ubiquitous military blue is visible. A snatch of melody is whistled. One of the carabinieri making himself useful, I suppose, getting rid of the rubbish for the maid. I meander on, contented and absorbed. Why do people ever live in cities who need not?—my perennial query. Could I ever

tire of the country, as is always prophesied? I hug myself with self-satisfaction to be in this blessed garden.

“What’s the blue-cloaked fellow doing? Silly chap to leave his precious bonfire and come into my part of the garden! I am becoming unreasonably acquisitive. Laughing at myself, I turn off along a grass path in the opposite direction. The sun will soon set and there will be a lovely twilight. The moon is crescent.

Bother this man! He’s going to talk to me. Horrors! It’s General Artuzzi I’ve been so obviously avoiding all this time. He strides up to me beaming, six feet of monocled friendliness.

“Oh! Was it you over there by the bonfire?” I begin. What a stupid thing to say! But my French vocabulary is inefficient for pleasant conversation, and he doesn’t talk English.

“Rather! I’m a great gardener,” he replies.
“You like it?”

He sees that I do and continues approvingly: “*J’adore la campagne.*” So in his spurs, top-boots and immaculate uniform, he fits his step to mine and points out where his garden ends and General Moris’ begins.

“And am I in your garden?” I inquire.

“You certainly are.”

“Where is your house, then?”

“I haven’t a house here, only a garden. I will have a house, though. I’m going to build one. At present we live in the city. My wife and daughters, who were talking to you indoors, like the city.”

Our conversation is rather like a French exercise, but we get on quite well. He gives all the flowers their French names and I check them off in English. We find roses, mint, rosemary, myrtle, verbena, marigolds, and chrysanthemums. Lilac d'Italia is stock, I learn. We come back to the house after sunset, when through the fir branches the first star shines out close to the moon. My companion vows it is a planet; but he fails to convince me.

Indoors tea is being served, and as soon as we are seated he begins to explain to Signora Artuzzi, in Italian, how delightful it is to find someone sensible enough to prefer the fresh air of a garden to the stuffiness of a drawing-room, someone who knows about the sky as well as the garden. This is all for the benefit of his town-loving daughters. The charming girls take not the slightest notice of his age-old complaint, however, while the Signora, whose ally I had been earlier in the afternoon, is wholly unmoved. In fact she seems to accuse him of talking irrelevance, as, transferring her glance to me for one moment, she looks back at him and says: "But she's English. They all like the out-of-doors."

The Swiss ambassador and his wife are introduced. They ask about our Villeneuve visit. Was it enjoyable? I tell them of the morning walk on the mountain and how much Bapu appreciated their fellow-countryman Pierre Ceresole. But they see him, of course, from a different angle. How can the Powers-That-Be feel the same delight that Bapu does in a leader of men whose whole life is spent in building up an army of constructive international

service in order to supersede the military? They are very nice, however, and we talk of disarmament.

“We in England think Pierre is showing all Europe the way.”

“But we in Switzerland must not be the first to disarm,” remarks one of the Swiss women.

“Who should, then?” I inquire.

“Oh! it’s clear to all of us that it’s Great Britain’s duty to do that.”

In bursts the young lady journalist and a friend.

“But Mr. Gandhi is not seeing journalists,” we announce. The interlopers are coped with. May they wait for prayers and see him then? That sounds safe.

It is nearly prayer-time, and immediately after that, his silence day begins and he will speak no more in Europe. Then it is “Good-bye” for us all.

It is not pleasant contemplating saying good-bye to Bapu. It is twelve weeks since he arrived in Bow. I thought of him before he arrived, as a great character, wholly admirable, completely selfless, a man of God, who never took a step or made a decision except after prayer, one who had brought a new element into politics. I found it impossible to over-estimate the value of enthroning the vow of truth, frankness and utter openness, in the realms of policy and State affairs.

But before you can say you know anyone, you need to see them at home, to live with them.* I had been with him now for twelve weeks; I had seen him in every mood, in every circumstance. I

* See Appendix H.

had seen him, moreover, in the light of my own moods; whatever state I happened to be in—pre-occupied, weary, gay or serious—I always had to reckon with my guest.

I had seen him day after day in the cold, dark, pre-dawn hour of 5.30 a.m., at midnight on his return from those endless late conferences with Moslem delegates, at midday surrounded by throngs of children, sitting for hours by an ex-Prime Minister's drawing-room fire, at St. James' Palace surrounded by lords and ladies, Princes and Cabinet Ministers. And always he was exactly the same—serene, gay, humorous, appreciative, selfless, at one with God and man.

I welcomed him to Bow as a great man whom I admired. I bade him farewell as a dear, delightful, and wholly reliable friend.

CHAPTER XVIII

H.M. PRISON ENTERTAINS HIM

Monday, 4th January, 1932.

THERE was no blare from my alarm clock, yet I was wide awake. I looked out over the roof for what might have disturbed me—nothing but stars and darkness.

4.40 a.m. What an absurd hour! I washed, dressed, performed my portion of the housework, swept and dusted the office, disinfected the 'phone, washed the walls, vimmed the basin. Still too early to go out for my prayer-walk. I went through my correspondence, wrote some personal letters, ate an orange, and at length sallied forth.

At six o'clock, instead of picking my way along the canal bank, I took the broad street towards St. Michael's. I was thinking of the challenge presented to us at the previous night's service. The speaker, a working man, had analysed the situation in which 1932 found us, begged each of us to study it more deeply and then to be sure to do something about it. He asked us to face facts in the light of God's will as clearly announced by Jesus Christ; he made us consider the Russian experiment and the tremendous amount of creative energy expended on it, our

own industrial situation, our economic position, the ignominy of the Means Test with its ruthless probing into all the privacies of decent family life, the Indian crisis with public opinion here completely moulded by a tendentious Press hardening against the Indian claim to independence. There was passion in his appeal to us to take our stand valorously as Christians.

Musing on his words, I passed a paper shop.

“Arrest of Gandhi,” shouted the placard.*

Thus the unequal fight begins. I believe we British are foredoomed to defeat in this struggle. We cannot fight our best when the enemy persists in keeping up the spirit of friendliness. We cannot work up enthusiasm to nerve us to attack unresisting men for very long. We cannot fight women. Their strength is to keep still. They will lie down by the score on the roads, on the railway tracks or wherever else their assailants elect to pass with the munitions of war.

Have you ever seen a procession of caterpillars in Italy or the South of France, passing along or across a road on a long trek that some imperious instinct compels them to undertake? A car may destroy hundreds or thousands of them, but their journey is not abandoned. A new leader is appointed so soon as the previous one is destroyed; their resources seem infinite. There are three hundred and fifty million Indians.

As among the Christians in the early days when Imperial Rome became the persecutor of the faithful, the battle was set between the might of an

* See Appendix D.

Empire, perfectly organised for the most efficient government the world had ever known, and the scratch handful of men and women who believed in a new way of life. The fight dragged on for generations; those who could kill against those who were only willing to die. At length victory was established. The defeat lay with those who were only able to kill.

Napoleon once said: "Alexander, Charlemagne and I founded great empires. We founded them on force. Where are they to-day? Jesus Christ founded His on love, and to-day millions would gladly die for Him."

Given a grain or two more of imaginative insight in those holding the reins of government, given a single London paper that, without prejudice to its views, had consistently used a quarter of the space it devoted to daily chat about goats and loin-cloths, for a clear day-by-day exposition of the Indian point of view,* the British public could have understood the situation. Given a second appointment as Viceroy, of a man wholly devoted to God, given any other moment in the last three years rather than the fateful weeks of a panic election, and the people of Britain might have won for themselves a glory and a prestige successive ages could not have dimmed.

For it may be that even now in the womb of destiny, lies the desire of all nations—the peace of the world, through a new understanding between East and West, India and Britain. Can the

* See Appendix C.

embryo develop when grim events are toward? poverty, fear, slow starvation, tariff walls, unemployment, racial pride?

Gandhi is in prison now.* No doubt there are many repeating the time-honoured phrase: "Gandhi is a spent force." But such faith as Gandhi's wins through, moving away the mountains of Imperialistic prejudice and stiff-necked racial pride.

If we are truly to represent Christianity in India, Christ must be put first. So long as there is an underfed child there, so long as there is racial scorn, so long as there is repression and misunderstanding, so long as there is not freedom, for just so long Christ suffers.

* See Appendix I.

APPENDICES

- A. Voluntary Poverty.
- B. A Challenge.
- C. India and the National Congress, by M. K. Gandhi.
- D. Mr. Gandhi's Arrest and the Events leading up to it, by Henry Polak.
- E. Poverty in India.
 - (a) Extract from speech delivered by Dr. Rabindranath Tagore while in Russia. Reprinted by kind permission of the Editor of the *Manchester Guardian*.
 - (b) Extract from a British missionary's letter.
- F. The Case of Dr. Forrester-Paton.
- G. Mr. Gandhi and the alleged Roman interview.
- H. An article by Mr. Gandhi.
- I. Rabindranath Tagore's appeal and Gandhi's response.

APPENDIX A

[From the *Daily News*, March 15, 1921]

VOLUNTARY POVERTY

EAST END INVITATION TO THE WEALTHY WEST

Charity of "Sell All Thou Hast . . ."

A striking invitation to the rich and well-to-do to prove the worth of Christianity by voluntarily adopting a life of poverty has been made by four noted social workers in London.

The signatories to the appeal are:

Rosa Hobhouse, who, with her husband, renounced a fortune and now lives in a tenement in Aske Street, Hoxton.

Muriel Lester, who conducts a settlement in Bow.

Mary Hughes, who is engaged in work of a similar character and lives at Blackwell Buildings, Whitechapel.

Stanley James, an ex-Congregational minister, now the "tramp" of the "Crusader."

Compulsory Want

"We know those who cannot obtain adequate clothing, sheets and warm covering, or necessary

food for their children and themselves," says the appeal.

"The poverty which we refer to is commonly known as a state of privation or destitution. But we prefer to call this condition of theirs compulsory want, being brought upon them by force of hard circumstance. Our invitation to you is not into this enforced poverty; but into a very glorious alternative, involving a drastic readjustment in your affairs, called Voluntary Poverty.

We invite you into this condition, that the needs of others, whether in our country or abroad, may generously be supplied by the overflowing of your treasure. We do not here wish to encourage the charity of patronage, but rather the large charity of God, which rejoices in richly providing.

Consequences of Sacrifice

"Nor do we desire to indicate the exact consequences of the step into Voluntary Poverty, into which we invite you. It will suffice to say we have many visions of possible blessing, derived from intimate contact with the sorrows of the oppressed."

The signatories invite those interested to a meeting at Kingsway Hall, Bow, next Monday afternoon.

THE BRETHREN OF THE COMMON TABLE

The Brethren of the Common Table are a company of men and women who are united in the belief that love, as revealed in the life and death of Jesus, is the sole basis of human society.

They take for their guidance the fact that the Son of God, while the shadows of death gathered round Him, set up, in the midst of a world consumed by the greed of wealth and harassed by the fear of poverty, a Common Table.

The Table stands as a token of the Divine Brotherhood and brings to view the overflowing life and riches of God given to the world in Jesus Christ. In this vision man is raised above both greed and fear and thus removed from all occasions of strife. But the life of God can be received only as we share the gift of His love, since God is made known to us through the sacrament of fellowship. It is in giving that we receive.

The Brotherhood accepts the responsibility of sharing the divine life with all. The Brethren recognise that they are called upon to spend themselves in the effort to deliver men from the fear and greed that lead to strife, so that at last, in every sphere of life, individual, social, industrial, international, love may prevail over greed and violence, and fear give way to a calm trust in the sufficiency of God for all our needs.

The primary concern of the Order is to perfect the life of the individual by providing a way in which each may learn to share with others the material as well as the spiritual gifts of God and so enter more fully into the Kingdom of Heaven.

APPENDIX B

A CHALLENGE

HAVE you considered your responsibility for the destiny of the people of India?

The issues of life and death for 350,000,000 children of God lie in your hands.

In India, two hundred million rupees accrue annually to the Government from the sale of alcoholic drink, as well as thirty-five million rupees from the cultivation, manufacture and sale of opium.

In Delhi, I stood outside the Government licensed drug shop and watched the wretched addicts press through the crowd to make their purchases. They turned to me with amazement when they heard I had come from a country where the sale of opium was not encouraged by Government.

“When you go back, please tell your people about our wretchedness,” they besought me. “Ask them to close down these shops, for we are weak of mind and if the places are open we cannot hold back from it.”

“I ache all over, Miss Sahib,” said one, “and I cannot save myself.”

“I pray God’s blessing on you if you can do anything to help us,” added another.

Then a boy of twelve or thirteen came up, carrying a baby in his arms. "You're not going to take this poison, son," suggested my companion.

He reassured her with a broad grin, "Oh, no, I'm only buying it for the baby."

Ashamed, I looked upon the crowd of watchful faces all around. Their gaze was fixed upon me with characteristic Indian sincerity and they nodded gravely as though to impress me with the truth of the boy's answer, volunteering statistics to convince me of the widespread custom of baby-doping.

It is held that 98 per cent. of the women who work in the cotton mills of Bombay regularly dope their children each morning before going to work.

Miss Mary Campbell (to whom the King presented the Kaiser-i-Hind medal in recognition of her life-long work for India) told me she had once seen women fighting to get into an opium shop near closing time. In disgust she went to the nearest Excise official and told him what she had just witnessed.

He duly deplored the fact. Knowing that the official Excise policy was responsible for the continuance of the situation, she asked him what he could advise.

He pondered a moment and then asked her if she couldn't start a Mothers' Meeting for the women.

Does this official's attitude represent your feelings on the subject? You are responsible for his being there. He is a paid servant of the Government of India, which in its turn is controlled by our own House of Commons.

"But the opium evil is not nearly so serious as the drink evil," said Mr. Gandhi to me. "The opium addict only makes himself suffer—the drinker makes others suffer—generally women."

Educated Indians by nature, upbringing and religion are opposed to drink. To them, even moderate drinking is a sin. They passionately desire to prohibit alcoholic drink and drugs. Year after year they have passed resolutions in Congress to this effect.

Under the Montagu Reforms, certain departments were transferred to Ministers responsible to the Provincial Councils, and Excise (drink and opium) was one of these. "Now we shall be able to cope with the evil," said the optimists. Sanitation and Education were transferred subjects which Indian leaders had pledged themselves to develop energetically. Both leaders and people were determined to provide more facilities for education.* As the situation became clearer, however, it transpired that a large proportion of the provincial revenue was to be derived from Excise, so that in order to keep their pledge of extending education, Indian leaders would have to break their other pledge of getting rid of the curse of drink and opium.

This discovery caused intense bitterness, and is responsible for continual friction and misunderstanding. It appeared to the Indians a clever,

* It is computed that at present (1927) there are only sufficient places in school for 4 per cent. of the people and the average amount contributed per head towards the cost of Education from the people of British India is 1*d.*, while for military expenditure the average amount contributed per head is 3*s.* 3*d.*

sinister move to prejudice their dearest hopes, creating an *impasse*, an injustice from which there was no redress, for the Provincial finances would be insufficient for the maintenance of both the reserved and transferred departments, in the absence of revenue derived from Excise, without additional grants by the Central Government, which, as is clear from the following statement of Sir Basil Blackett, the Finance Member of the Government of India, in the Indian Assembly in September 1925, would be strongly hostile to such a demand:

“ If Local Option or Prohibition was going to be attempted by any of the Local Governments, the Government of India would not be able to look on.”

One leading educationist, a man honoured and respected all over India, declared that he would rather have every school in the country shut down than run them on the profits of the drink and opium traffic.

In the Council of State on February 9, 1927, a Prohibition resolution was moved. Mr. Bryne, the official spokesman, thereupon stood up to move an amendment to safeguard the rights of the moderate drinker.

In the subsequent debate, after speeches from Hindus and Mohammedans emphasising the religious ground of their support of Prohibition, a Director-General of the Indian Medical Service, Major-General Symons, got up to say that “ alcohol was a poison only when taken in an immoderate quantity, just in the same way as every food taken

in excess was a poison. Wine, if taken in small quantity, was a stimulant to digestion and as such improved health."

In Mr. Gandhi's opinion it is as immoral to run a State on the proceeds of drink as it would be to run it on the proceeds of legalised prostitution.

If this seems an exaggerated remark, consider the different circumstances. Although educated Indians are against drink, those who are outside the recognised castes, the Untouchables, of whom there are some 50 million, are hardened drinkers. I was in a school for Untouchables in Ahmedabad, one of the many that are being founded and supported by followers of Gandhi.

The boys and girls ranged from the ages of six to eleven years. I was watching the youngest children, thinking how essentially like they were, with their eager, happy faces, to our own Nursery School children in Bow, when the Hindu lady who had founded the school said to me, "You may find it hard to believe, Miss Lester, but every one of these children was a regular drinker until we founded this school and weaned them away from it."

In the non-co-operation days, when pickets stood outside the drink and opium shops, politely salaaming each intending customer and begging him not to enter the shop or buy the poison, the wave of anti-drink feeling which swept the country grew so high that at the annual auction of licenses scarcely anyone turned up to bid.

After the movement was called off, the inevitable reaction set in; even some of the educated Hindus,

young and disillusioned as they were, began to adopt British drinking habits; but these are only a small minority, albeit a growing one. Therefore it was that Mr. Gandhi gave me a challenge the last night of my stay with him.

When you go back to England will you tell your countrymen what you have seen? Will you stir up public opinion, convert Cabinet Ministers, and convince Members of Parliament, rouse the Churches and make the whole nation see that they must no longer obstruct our national passion for Prohibition? If you decide to do this, you must not leave this country until you have seen Lord Lytton and talked with Excise officials, telling them what you intend to do, and when you arrive in England it will not be fair to make a single public statement until you have been to the India Office and seen Lord Birkenhead and told them there what you are going to say.

See everyone who is relative to your purpose; if they reject you, make their rejection your strength, if they listen to you and help you, it is well. They will say, "What about alternative sources of revenue? 200 million rupees is a big loss." You must have an answer for that, though it is not the function of a reformer to provide statesmen with solutions of financial problems.*

If the thing is wrong, it must go, whatever the cost. But there is a clear and obvious way of balancing the Budget without Excise revenue. Reduce the vast amount swallowed up in military

* I found several highly placed British officials shared this view.

expenditure. That is the true line of development, for everyone knows we are a non-violent people.

As soon as you let me know you have done this thing, I will come at my own expense, with ten million signatures of my countrymen, to complete the great work. God bless you.

RESOLUTION to be sent to local Members of Parliament, the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for India in Council, the India Office, White-hall, London.

“ In the opinion of this meeting the maintenance of the opium and liquor traffic in India, against the will of the Indian people, is discreditable to the British Government and people, and ought to be ended at the earliest possible moment. The meeting regrets that under the Government of India Act, Excise has been transferred in such a way as to make the development of education and other nation-building services dependent upon the liquor revenue, thereby rendering it almost impossible for the Provincial Ministers to undertake the policy of Prohibition. The meeting is of opinion that in the further constitutional reforms now contemplated it should be made possible for the will of the Indian people to prevail, so that complete Prohibition may be carried out without obstruction from the Government of India, the loss of revenue thereby sustained being met by a reduction of military expenditure.”

MURIEL LESTER.

Kingsley Hall, Bow, London.
1927.

APPENDIX C

INDIA AND THE NATIONAL CONGRESS

By M. K. GANDHI

I. India has a population of 350,000,000 who are spread through her 700,000 villages. The city population is not more than 6,000,000, therefore it is no exaggeration to say that India is the villages and not the cities. One-third of the country is under the rule of the Princes, owing allegiance to the Crown.

II. Ninety per cent. of the population is agricultural. As the peasantry has to depend on the rainfall for cultivation and as the rainfall is restricted to particular months in the year, the peasantry is idle for nearly six months in the year.

Before the British advent, say 150 years ago, these six months were occupied in ginning, carding, spinning and weaving cotton, and this gave the people a supplementary occupation in their own homes, and meant at least 25 per cent. addition to their income. This industry was destroyed deliberately by the East India Company, and in process of time India, which used to export the finest fabric to all parts of the world, became importer of cloth manufactured from cotton sent from her shores. This cloth was, until

recently, imported mainly from Lancashire. The result of the destruction of this supplementary industry was chronic unemployment for millions of people for half the year, and, therefore, chronic starvation.

The average income of an Indian is 2*d.* per day as against the British average of 4*s.* per day. It should be understood that in arriving at the average, the millions of the millionaires also are taken into account. It therefore follows that many have no income at all and that they are living on charity that is thrown at them.

III. One result of British rule, therefore, is abject pauperism. The second is emasculation of a whole nation. The people's representatives have no share in real responsibility, and the whole population is disarmed to such an extent that the villagers are unable to defend themselves against ferocious beasts, such as wolves and tigers. And they have no adequate protection against thieves and robbers.

There are in India several organisations whose object is to free India from this abject condition, and for that purpose to achieve responsible Government. By far the oldest, the most effective and popular organisation of this type is the Indian National Congress, which is nearly fifty years old. It is daily growing in influence and popularity. Its immediate object is the attainment of complete independence through non-violent and truthful means. Any Indian adult, male or female, above the age of eighteen years can become a member of this organisation by signing its creed, and paying four annas per

year or spinning 2,000 yards of yarn out of cotton supplied by a Congress Committee. Thus there is practically adult suffrage for belonging to the Congress. It has Committees and Sub-Committees throughout the length and breadth of the land and has several million members on its roll and exercises influence on untold millions. These members are drawn from all classes. It holds an annual Session at some important centre in India, and this is attended by thousands of visitors. The Delegation is restricted to 6,000, the delegates being chosen by the vote of the people. Its administration is carried on through provincial organisations, and through the All-India Congress Committee, consisting of 350 members, and a Working Committee consisting of fifteen members elected from the members of the All-India Congress Committee. The Working Committee may be somewhat likened to the British Cabinet. It is elected annually. At the present moment it contains nine Hindus (including one woman), four Muslims, one Sikh and one Parsee.

In the year 1920, after being satisfied that no real advance towards responsibility was to be had through mere negotiation, and in order to check the rising tide of terrorism on the part of the impatient youths of the country, the Congress decided to enter upon non-violent non-co-operation, including Civil Disobedience and non-payment of taxation. The Congress also decided that in any non-violent struggle constructive effort must occupy a predominant place, and that self-purification should be the basis for such efforts. The Congress therefore

undertook a campaign against untouchability: sought to revive the old supplementary industry of hand-spinning, to promote Hindu-Muslim unity and to carry on a campaign against the drink and the drug habit.

Repressive measures were adopted by the Government against non-co-operation, and thousands were imprisoned. In 1922 some Congress men at a place called Chauri Chaura belied the Congress creed by doing violence to and killing some policemen, and therefore Civil Disobedience was suspended—much constructive work, however, went on.

In due course and after fruitless attempts at negotiating a settlement, the Congress embarked last year upon very active Civil Disobedience, beginning with the unlicensed manufacture of salt. In the course of this campaign, nearly sixty thousand people, including hundreds of women, were imprisoned. In many parts of India lathi charges were resorted to by the police for dispersing processions and the like, and in Peshawar unarmed crowds were fired upon, resulting in several deaths and many more wounded. Except in Sholapur, the non-violent spirit was observed by the people, as has been testified to by alien observers, English and others. When, as I think, the people were sufficiently tried, the then Viceroy, Lord Irwin, discharged from prison the principal civil resisters. Negotiations were opened, and the result was the famous Delhi Pact, as a result of which the Congress decided to send me to the Round Table Conference as the sole delegate, and Mrs. Sarojini

Naidu, Pandit Malaviya, and others also were open to be invited to the Conference and they came to press the Congress demand. It may be stated here that the Conference consisted not of elected representatives, but nominated members, nominations having been finally made by the Secretary of State for India. It may be mentioned that there was a great awakening among the women during the last year. Thousands came out of the purdah (which means seclusion in the homes), picketed liquor shops, foreign cloth shops, did village work, organised khadi (hand-spinning work), took part in processions, braving all the risks with men. They occupied during critical times posts of the highest responsibility.

The Congress demand was, and is, as follows :

1. Complete independence, not, however, excluding partnership at will on absolutely equal terms with Britain, and determinable at the instance of either party subject to the discharge of the mutual obligations or adjustments being made therefor.
2. Complete independence necessarily includes full control in the hands of the responsible Government over the defence forces and external affairs and finance.
3. Such safeguards as may be proved to be necessary in the interests of India would be accepted by the Congress.
4. Congress is quite willing that the nation should take over all the legitimate obligations, but insists upon an examination by an impartial tribunal of all the obligations that the nation may be called upon to bear. It is contended that there were in

the past many British transactions which were debited to India, but which India should not have been called upon to bear. It is also contended that India should not be called upon to take over the whole of the Army or the Civil Services, or to be held responsible for pensioning off those who may not be wanted. Many appointments have been made, in spite of the protest on behalf of the nation. Contracts have been also entered into by British authorities in the face of public opinion. Moreover, an army that may be required by an alien power for its support need not be required by a national government. Similarly a national government would not require an expensive Civil Service, the most expensive known in the world; hence it would be wrong to saddle India with all the burdens and then expect her to guarantee the discharge of those burdens. Britain has claimed to be trustee for India. Every ward has the undoubted right to decide what liabilities he would take over and what he would not.

IV. There is the question of minorities—that is to say satisfaction of the claims advanced by Muslims, Sikhs, Anglo-Indians, Indian Christians, Europeans and so-called Untouchables.

The Congress is a National Organisation, and it is committed to a purely national solution of these questions, but it will, if necessary, accept the principle of special reservation of seats in the Legislature for Muslims and Sikhs, and this it would do as a necessary evil because of historic reasons. The present Congress has inherited a legacy of the past.

The evil cannot be extended by giving special representation to the other minorities. Any such recognition will divide the nation into water-tight compartments, making the growth of the national spirit impossible.

With regard to the so-called Untouchables—their cause has been, and is, the special care of the Congress, and it would be unjust to treat them separately and thus give untouchability a legal status, when every attempt is being made to do away with the evil altogether, and to merge the Untouchables into the so-called Caste Hindus. It should be remembered that Untouchables are a part of Hindu Society.

The Congress has advocated the recital of fundamental rights that should be common to all and the guarantee of the civic and religious rights, culture, etc., belonging to the different minorities. Everyone will be equal in the eye of the law. There will be no political disability placed upon anyone on the ground of race, creed, or colour, and the Congress being wedded to adult franchise—male and female—there should be no difficulty in representatives of any minority seeking election to the Legislatures and getting elected on the strength of National Service. As a voluntary organisation the Congress has always followed this policy, and all classes have taken part in the National Movement to a greater or lesser degree.

APPENDIX D

“MR. GANDHI’S ARREST” *

BY HENRY S. L. POLAK

[Quoted by kind permission of Mr. Polak]

ON December 14th, whilst Mr. Gandhi was *en route* for India, an Ordinance applicable to the United Provinces was issued by the Viceroy for the purpose of preventing the threatened “no rent” campaign among the agricultural tenants. The local Government, in justifying the Ordinance, declared that this campaign had been deliberately worked up by the Provincial Congress Committee for several months, in breach of the letter and the spirit of the Gandhi-Irwin Pact. The Government spokesman later expressly stated in the Legislative Council that the Ordinance was intended to be confined in its operation purely to this campaign. In pursuance thereof an Order was served upon Mr. Jaharwarlal Nehru, ex-President and now General Secretary of the Indian National Congress, and the admitted organiser of the “no-rent” campaign, forbidding him to leave the Allahabad district without the permission of the district officer. Mr. Nehru is stated to have replied that he was not pre-

* A pamphlet (6d.) obtainable from Friends’ Book Shop, Euston Road, London.

pared to take orders from anybody except the Congress in the matter of his own activities. This apparently was interpreted in official circles as an open defiance of the law, and when, therefore, Mr. Nehru, on December 26, disobeyed the order by leaving Allahabad without permission for Bombay, for the purpose of attending a meeting of the Working Committee of the Congress, to be held on Mr. Gandhi's arrival on the 28th, he was arrested, detained in jail, and later convicted and sentenced under the Ordinance to a term of imprisonment. This was regarded in Congress and some other circles as a breach of the official undertaking to confine the operation of the Ordinance strictly to the "no-rent" campaign.

On December 25, the Viceroy issued three further Ordinances applicable to the North-West Frontier Province, where, it was officially stated, "Red Shirt" activities, under the authority of the Congress, covering a long period and producing widespread unrest, had caused the Government grave anxiety for the security of the frontier districts, and Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, known as the "Frontier Gandhi," the "Red Shirt" leader, was arrested and interned.

Thus, when Mr. Gandhi reached Bombay, on the 28th, he found no less than five special Ordinances in operation, overriding the ordinary law of the land and affecting three separate provinces in Northern India, and two of his colleagues already in prison.

It is uncertain what action Sir Samuel Hoare took to acquaint the Viceroy with the result of his final

interview with Mr. Gandhi. It is, however, known that no communication from the Viceroy awaited Mr. Gandhi at Bombay, and the latter made no immediate effort to communicate with the Viceroy, preferring to remain in Bombay for consultation with the Working Committee of the Congress.

In a Press interview on the afternoon of the 28th, Mr. Gandhi stated, *inter alia*, that he regarded the Ordinances as "a challenge to the Congress." At the same time he reiterated that he would try every means to avoid another fiery ordeal. This he repeated at a great public meeting that evening, when he condemned the Bengal terrorist activities, as also the Government's attempt to "unman a whole race." He is reported to have said that he did not expect that he would be able to exercise the same restraint upon himself as before, if it came to taking a strong step. If a fight was inevitable, he would expect every son of the soil to contribute his mite. In the last fight they had to face lathis, but this time they would have to face bullets. Continuing, he said: "I would not flinch from sacrificing even a million lives for India's liberty. I told this to the English people in England. Due to my visit to England my optimism has been strengthened that our sincerity to a cause will even melt the hardest of stony hearts. We have no reason to believe that the Ministers in England are dishonest in their convictions. They sincerely believe that we are not fit for Swaraj. This is how they are tutored by the men on the spot. . . . The only way to achieve our end is to adhere to non-violence to the last, even by those who take

it as a policy. So long as it is the Congress creed you must stick to it or have it changed. You will enhance the prestige of the Congress by strict adherence to it. If the Congress gives up Satyagraha, the Government, it is said, would make peace with the Congress. But, with due deference, I may tell the Government that Satyagraha is a part of the Congress programme, and, as I told them in England, the Government shall have to settle up accounts with the Congress."

He described the news of the arrests of his colleagues as "Christmas presents from Lord Willingdon." He concluded his remarks by saying that he had hoped it would be possible for him to find a way to co-operate with the Government, but he had to admit that the signs he had noticed had considerably weakened his hopes. However, Mr. Gandhi added, he would still try his best to find a way out. He asked them to get rid of the fear of death and to face it with courage, if necessary; but in doing so they should see to it that not even a hair of an Englishman was hurt. They should hope to bring about a change of heart in the Englishman by their sufferings. His visit to Europe had increased his faith in non-violence, as he believed that non-violence could even melt stones.

The Working Committee thereafter met. It is known that a section of the members held the view that the policy of the Government meant a complete breach between the Congress and the Government, and that further negotiations were useless. Mr. Gandhi is credited with having prevailed upon the

Committee to defer their decision till he had had a chance of ascertaining the Government's view, of which he wished to be certain before launching a new campaign of civil disobedience. It was, therefore, suggested that the Committee should adjourn and that Mr. Gandhi should immediately seek an interview with the Viceroy. This proposal, however, was vetoed by the majority of the Committee, and it was decided that Mr. Gandhi should send a telegram to the Viceroy acquainting him with the Congress viewpoint. Mr. Gandhi, thereupon, on the 29th, telegraphed to the Viceroy as follows: "I was unprepared on landing yesterday to find Frontier and United Provinces Ordinances, shootings in Frontier and arrests of valued comrades in both on the top of the Bengal Ordinance waiting me. I do not know whether I am to regard these as an indication that friendly relations between us are closed, or whether you expect me still to see you and receive guidance from you as to the course I am to pursue in advising the Congress. I would esteem a wire in reply."

On the night of the 30th, the Viceroy attended the annual dinner of the European Association in Calcutta, and delivered an important speech that appeared textually in the Indian Press the following day. Referring to the circumstances that had been officially held to justify the Ordinances, he remarked: "I venture to hope that even at this eleventh hour Mr. Gandhi, the acknowledged leader of the Congress party, who has only very recently returned from England, will call a halt to these activities and will

agree to co-operate with us and give us the advantage of his powerful influence to help forward the solution of the great problem that is before us, namely, to secure for the Indian people responsibility for administering their own affairs.

“ Lastly, I wish to say a word to my own countrymen on a matter on which I have always felt strongly, a word as to the relations between our two races, which have been one of the main causes of our difficulties and troubles in the past. I believe we have all been placed in this world for a period of time to work out the will of Providence, that there can be no question of superiority or inferiority on account of race and colour wherever our work may be, and that it cannot be the colour of a man that makes the man, but it is the character of a man, whatever his colour, that counts.”

In a long telegram, received by Mr. Gandhi on the 31st, the Viceroy justified in detail the Ordinances by reference to the events that, in the Government’s opinion, had inevitably led up to them. Addressing Mr. Gandhi, he continued: “ You have yourself been absent from India on the business of the Round Table Conference and, in the light of the attitude which you have observed there, His Excellency is unwilling to believe that you have personally any share in the responsibility for, or that you approve of, the recent activities of the Congress in the United Provinces and in the North-West Frontier Province. If this is so, he is willing to see you and to give you his views as to the way in which you can best exert your influence to

maintain the spirit of co-operation which animated the proceedings of the Round Table Conference. But His Excellency feels bound to emphasise that he will not be prepared to discuss with you measures which the Government of India, with the full approval of His Majesty's Government, have found it necessary to adopt in Bengal, the United Provinces, and the North-West Frontier Province. These measures must in any case be kept in force until they have served the purpose for which they were imposed, namely, the preservation of law and order essential to good government. On receipt of your reply His Excellency proposes to publish this correspondence."

In the course of a long rejoinder to the Viceroy, dated the 1st January, Mr. Gandhi declared that, in his opinion, the constitutional issues dwindled into insignificance in the face of the Ordinances and action taken thereunder. He repudiated all suggestion that the Congress desired to promote disorder in any shape or form, but denied any justification for going outside the ordinary law, in order to deal with the disorders complained of by the Government, by resort to Ordinances which he denounced as legalised Government terrorism.

Continuing, Mr. Gandhi said: "I heartily assent to the proposition laid down in your telegram that co-operation must be mutual. But your telegram leads me irresistibly to the conclusion that His Excellency demands co-operation from the Congress without returning any on behalf of Government. I cannot read in any other way his peremptory refusal to discuss these matters which, as I have endeavoured

to show, have at least two sides. The popular side I have put as I understand it, but before committing myself to a definite judgment I was anxious to understand the order, that is, the Government side, and then tender my advice to the Congress. With reference to the last paragraph of your telegram I may not repudiate moral liability for the actions of my colleagues whether in the Frontier Province or United Provinces, but I confess that I was ignorant of the detailed actions and activities of my colleagues whilst I was absent from India, and it was because it was necessary for me to advise and guide the Working Committee of the Congress, and in order to complete my knowledge, I sought with an open mind and with the best of intentions an interview with His Excellency and deliberately asked for his guidance. I cannot conceal from His Excellency my opinion that the reply he has condescended to send was hardly a return for my friendly and well-meant approach. And if it is not yet too late I would ask His Excellency to reconsider his decision and see me as a friend, without imposing any conditions whatsoever as to the scope or subject of discussion, and I on my part can promise that I would study with an open mind all the facts that he might put before me. I would unhesitatingly and willingly go to the respective provinces and, with the aid of the authorities, study both sides of the question, and if I came to the conclusion, after such a study, that the people were in the wrong and that the Working Committee, including myself, were misled as to the correct position, and that the Government

was right, I should have no hesitation whatsoever in making that open confession and guiding the Congress accordingly. Along with my desire and willingness to co-operate with the Government I must place my limitations before His Excellency. Non-violence is my absolute creed. I believe that civil disobedience is not only the natural right of a people, especially when they have no effective voice in their own Government, but that it is also a substitute for violence or armed rebellion. I can never, therefore, deny my creed. In pursuance thereof and on the strength of uncontradicted reports, supported by the recent activities of the Government of India, to the effect that there may be no other opportunity for me to guide the public, the Working Committee has accepted my advice and passed a resolution tentatively sketching a plan of civil disobedience. I am sending herewith the text of the resolution. If His Excellency thinks it worth while to see me, the operation of the resolution will be suspended pending our discussion, in the hope that it may result in the resolution being finally given up. I admit that the correspondence between His Excellency and myself is of such grave importance as not to brook delay in publication. I am, therefore, sending my telegram, your reply, this rejoinder, and the Working Committee's resolution for publication."

The Times of India, the principal organ of European opinion in Bombay, regarded Mr. Gandhi's telegram as on the whole satisfactory and urged the Viceroy to appreciate his sincerity and comply with his request for an interview.

On January 2, the following reply was received by Mr. Gandhi: "Your telegram of January 1 has been considered by His Excellency the Viceroy and his Government. They much regret to observe that under your advice the Congress Working Committee has passed a resolution which involves the general revival of civil disobedience in India unless certain conditions are satisfied which are stated in your telegram and resolution. His Excellency and his Government regard the attitude as the more deplorable in view of the declared intentions of His Majesty's Government and the Government of India to expedite the policy of constitutional reform contained in the Premier's statement. No Government, consistent with the discharge of its responsibility, can be subject to any condition sought to be imposed under the menace of unlawful action by any political organisation, nor can the Government of India accept the position implied in your telegram that its policy should be dependent on the judgment of yourself as to necessity of the measures which the Government has taken after the most careful and thorough consideration of the facts and after all other possible remedies have been exhausted.

"His Excellency and the Government can hardly believe that you or the Working Committee contemplate that His Excellency can invite you with the hope of any advantage to an interview held under the threat of the resumption of civil disobedience. His Excellency and his Government must hold you and the Congress responsible for all the consequences which may ensue from the action which the Congress

have announced their intention of taking and to meet which the Government will take all necessary measures."

This telegram was regarded by *The Times of India* as ill-advised and instrumental in producing a deadlock between the Government and the Congress.

On the morning of January 3, Mr. Gandhi addressed the following final telegram to the Viceroy : " Thanks for your wire of even date. I cannot help expressing deep regret for the decision of His Excellency and his Government. Surely it is wrong to describe an honest expression of opinion as a threat. May I remind the Government that the Delhi negotiations were opened and carried on whilst civil disobedience was on, and that when the Pact was made civil disobedience was not given up but only discontinued. This position was reasserted and accepted by His Excellency and his Government, in Simla, in September last, prior to my departure for London. Although I had made it clear that under certain circumstances the Congress might have to resume civil disobedience, the Government did not break off negotiations. That it was made clear by the Government that civil disobedience carried with it the penalty for disobedience merely proves what civil resisters bargain for, but does not in any way affect my argument. Had the Government resented that attitude, it was open to them not to send me to London. On the contrary, my departure had His Excellency's blessings.

" Nor is it fair or correct to suggest that I have ever advanced the claim that any policy of the

Government should be dependent on my judgment. But I do submit that any popular and constitutional Government would always welcome and sympathetically consider suggestions made by public bodies and their representatives and assist them with all available information about their acts or Ordinances of which public opinion may disapprove. I claim that my messages have no other meaning. Time alone will show whose position was justified.

“ Meanwhile I wish to assure the Government that every endeavour will be made on the part of the Congress to carry on the struggle without malice and in a strictly non-violent manner. It was hardly necessary to remind me that the Congress and I, its humble representative, are responsible for all the consequences of our actions.”

Meanwhile, on January 2, a number of prominent non-Congress people had interviewed Mr. Gandhi in Bombay, with a view to avoid a break, if possible. Among these were representatives of the Welfare of India League; Mr. E. C. Bentall, a European member of the Round Table Conference, who had just arrived from England; and Mr. Miller, of the Bombay European Association. The Welfare of India League addressed the following telegram to the Viceroy: “ General Council of Welfare of India League deplore that His Excellency the Viceroy’s telegram to Mahatma Gandhi should have rendered it impossible for him to have an interview with His Excellency. The deputation of the Council saw Mahatma Gandhi to-day with a view to exploring all possibilities of averting the impending crisis.

The deputation feel assured that Mahatma Gandhi has entirely an open mind with regard to measures taken by Government, and it is therefore all the more necessary that he should have an opportunity of fully discussing the situation with His Excellency. The Council therefore respectfully and earnestly request His Excellency to make the interview possible."

Similar telegrams were sent on behalf of the Indian Merchant's Chamber, Bombay, and the Millowners' Association.

None of these attempts at intervention appears to have proved fruitful, however, for in the early hours of January 4, Mr. Gandhi was arrested and interned under the old Bombay Regulation of 1827, and on the same day four new Ordinances, similar to those already in force elsewhere, were issued by the Viceroy and immediately applied to Bombay. Among other matters, they resulted in the proscription of the Working Committee of the Congress as an unlawful body.

Finally the following extract from the Resolutions of the Congress Working Committee is here given.

In the event of a satisfactory response not forthcoming, the Working Committee calls upon the nation to resume civil disobedience, including non-payment of taxes, under the following conditions and illustrative heads :

i. No province or district or Tahsil or village is bound to take up civil disobedience unless the people thereof understand the non-violent nature of the struggle, with all its implications, and are ready

to undergo sufferings involving loss of life and property.

2. Non-violence must be observed in thought, word, and deed in the face of gravest provocation, it being understood that the campaign is not one of seeking revenge or inflicting injuries on the oppressor, but is one of converting him through self-suffering and self-purification.

3. Social boycott with the intention of inflicting injury to the Government officers, police, or anti-nationalists can never be undertaken and is wholly inconsistent with the spirit of non-violence.

4. It should be borne in mind that non-violent campaigns are independent of pecuniary assistance. Therefore there should be no hired volunteers, but their bare maintenance and maintenance of the dependents of poor men and women who might have been imprisoned or killed is permissible wherever it is possible. The Working Committee, however, expects workers in the cause to continue the struggle even though they might have to suffer privations.

5. Boycott of all foreign cloth, whether British or of other countries, is obligatory under all circumstances.

6. All Congressmen and women are expected to use handspun and handwoven khaddar to the exclusion of even cloth manufactured in the indigenous mills.

7. Picketing of liquor shops and foreign cloth shops should be vigorously conducted chiefly by women, but always so as to ensure perfect non-violence.

8. Unlicensed manufacture and collections of salt should be resumed.

9. If processions and demonstrations are organised, only those should join them who will stand lathi charges or bullets without moving from their respective places.

10. Even in non-violent war, boycott of goods manufactured by the oppressor is perfectly lawful, inasmuch as it is never the duty of the victim to promote or retain commercial relations with the oppressor. Therefore boycott of British goods and concerns should be resumed and rigorously prosecuted.

11. Pure breach of non-moral laws and of laws and orders injurious to people, wherever considered possible and advisable, may be practised.

12. All unjust orders issued under an Ordinance may be civilly disobeyed.

APPENDIX E

POVERTY IN INDIA

[Reprinted by kind permission of the *Manchester Guardian*]

IN a speech delivered at the Dom Soyuzoff, Moscow, Dr. Rabindranath Tagore said :—

“ I believe that all human problems find their fundamental solution in education. And outside my own vocation as a poet I have accepted this responsibility to educate my people as much as it lies in my individual power to do. I know that all the evils, almost without exception, from which my land suffers are solely due to the utter lack of education of the people.

“ Poverty, and pestilence, communal fights and industrial backwardness, which make our path of life so narrow and perilous, are simply owing to the meagreness of education. You all know that our condition in India is very similar to yours. She has an agricultural population which is in need of all the help and encouragement that you have accorded to this country. You know how precarious is the living which exclusively depends upon agriculture, and so how utterly necessary it is for the cultivators to have the education, the up-to-date method of producing crops, in order to meet the

increasing demands of life and of expensive governments.

“Our people are living on the verge of perpetual famine, and do not know how to help this because they have lost their faith and confidence in their own humanity. This is the greatest misfortune of that people, of over 300,000,000 men and women burdened with profound ignorance, a closed prospect and incompetence.”

From a British missionary’s letter.

“The Gonds live by agriculture and hunting; often they only get one meal or less a day: if you send a letter by air mail, the stamp you use would keep a Gond mother and her child in prosperity for a fortnight.

“Now one cure of this poverty is Khadi: I am sure of it now. A Khadi village is quite different. Everyone is busy, energetic, happy, very different from the miserable slums of the mill-workers. But the real cure must ultimately be the transference of political power from the hands of the British into the hands of the Gandhi men. So long as the present foreign rule remains, any kind of social reform or village relief is a mere drop in the ocean. Only a national government run on the strictest lines of economy can reduce the great burden of taxation and divert the money squandered on the army and the India Civil service to the relief of the poor. To-day India spends three times as much on her army as all the other dominions put together spend on theirs. In Chindwara districts, where 90

per cent. of the population of Gonds suffer from a virulent form of malaria, government grants Rs. 100 a year to fight it and now has retrenched even that. The doctor, when I saw him, was in despair. 'We can do nothing,' he said. (The Viceroy, by the way, receives Rs. 100 every three hours for his salary.) I worked out the other day that on one Government *Chaplain's* salary we could maintain an Ashram of twenty workers and 100 Gond boys. Both from the financial side as well as from the psychological and moral side, I can see no hope for the poor of India except through India's complete independence. I know that the Congress is open to many criticisms, that many of its members are narrow, impetuous, fanatical, but it has this great thing at its heart: it is the one organisation besides the Catholic Church in India which is vitally concerned about the welfare of the poor."

APPENDIX F

THE CASE OF DR. FORRESTER-PATON

IN the House of Commons on February 29, 1932, the day given up to a debate on India, from 3 until 11 p.m. we sat, listened and watched. All the time many more vacant seats were in evidence than occupied ones. Usually the proportion seemed to be three to one.

Dr. Forrester-Paton's case was reported, but it did not seem to disturb the sense of general satisfaction with the present régime which characterised the Government spokesmen.

Dr. Paton comes of one of those old Scottish families which for many years have furnished Great Britain with some of her most devoted, level-headed and public-spirited sons. He is a Presbyterian missionary in India and has written home thus:—

“ I am very glad that you are keeping Indian problems to the fore. We do desperately need all your help and the help of every right-minded Briton.

“ It is quite evident that what is happening here is not allowed to appear in the newspapers there. The sad fact is that the Government of India, or at least the official part of it, have taken up the attitude that the Congress have declared War, and as a

consequence I suppose they consider that methods of 'frightfulness' as well as suppression of the truth are all part of the game. The leaders of the movement are all in jail, and yet new leaders seem to be able to come forward, and young men are still volunteering to go and picket, though that means an almost certain severe beating, and women are coming forward to be arrested or doused with coloured water or subjected to other indignities. As far as I know, the Congress volunteers have been rigorously maintaining their pledge of non-violence, though there must, no doubt, be a few exceptional cases where they have broken it. The action of the police is such that I am sure no crowd in an industrial centre in England or Scotland would stand without becoming violent. Yet as far as I know there have been few outbreaks of mob violence or even stone-throwing, though in Bombay there was a very threatening movement one day, and I understand that it was in some way connected with the Congress, who were able to pacify the people and prevent further trouble. All right-minded people deplore such dastardly acts as that on the Governor of Bengal recently. Those who commit these acts are those who have no faith in the Congress programme and methods of non-violence, and such acts do the greatest possible harm. On the other hand, the police by their actions (which are not their own, but have the backing of those in authority) are alienating all the best feeling in the country. There have been a number of strong protests in the Assembly and in the Legislatures, but they have

had no material effect so far. The sad thing is that there are also Indian Officials who are caught in the same system and who must either say amen to the Government policy or else resign, and for this course few have the courage or can afford to lose the large incomes they are getting.

“ There is, as far as I have seen, no racial antagonism whatever, and Indians of all classes continue to be as friendly as ever, and I personally get friends in villages and railway trains wherever I go. The mass of the village people in these parts (I can dare to speak only for a small part of Madras Presidency) are cowed by fear, they are afraid of the police and do not know what they will do next—in fact they are afraid to go into the towns in homespun cloth or even to take part in a Temperance Lecture, so they are just lying low. And so with the great majority, they are not making themselves heard, but in their hearts any faith in or affection for the British Raj is rapidly disappearing or giving place to distrust and fear, if not to actual hatred. Even the plainest villages can understand that what the police are doing in the name of Law and Order is in fact a cruel injustice, but they dare not protest lest that may draw the attention of the police on to themselves, and naturally those who are receiving salaries directly or indirectly from the Government (and this is a tremendously large class in India) are muzzled completely.

“ I am also enclosing a letter from my fellow-worker, Dr. Jesudason, which tells of what I experienced personally of police methods. I do not

know how much publicity this matter has already got in England, and there may be no need for it now, but I rather suspect that there must have been many incorrect reports about the matter which you may be able to correct, not for my sake, but for the sake of the thousands who have suffered far worse things than I. One of the greatest needs at this time is just for the correct information of the public in Britain.

“ With hearty greetings,
“ Yours sincerely,
“ ERNEST FORRESTER-PATON.”

What Dr. Forrester-Paton recently “ experienced personally of police methods ” is now well known. We here reprint the brief summary of the story as it was told in the House of Commons on February 29 by Mr. Morgan Jones.

“ There is no missionary more respected and loved by Indians than Dr. Forrester-Paton. He is the guide and inspiration of hundreds of students. His life of sacrifice and love of his hospital at Tirupattur is a most eloquent sermon of the beauty of real Christianity. A man of great wealth, he has, like St. Francis, adopted a life of poverty, and wears as its outward sign the simple homespun dress of the villagers. The other day he went to Madras to see whether it was true that the police were ill-treating the picketers and whether he could open a hospital for the wounded. As he was going through the bazaars, a police sergeant came to him. ‘ What country do you belong to? ’ ‘ Scotland,’ was the

reply. 'Why are you wearing the uniform?' (wearing the Khadi clothes). Dr. Paton said he was working among the poor. 'Are you a missionary?' 'Yes!' The sergeant then seems to have told Dr. Paton to go away. The doctor refused, and two sergeants beat him with lathis. He was wounded on both wrists, below the knees and in the forearm. A water-hose was then turned on him, and he was drenched. He tried to avoid the hose, and took shelter behind a handcart, but the cart was pulled away and the full force of the hose directed on the unfortunate missionary. At last, severely beaten, wet through, exhausted, Dr. Paton escaped to the Y.M.C.A., where his wounds were dressed."

The sequel is interesting. Dr. Paton, in spite of that, was prosecuted.

We continue the story in Dr. Forrester-Paton's own words:

"At 1 p.m., along with Dr. Hogg, I went to the Chief Secretary's office in the Fort Saint George by previous appointment. While waiting for the interview, the Commissioner of Police came outside the Chief Secretary's room and, seeing us, told me that I was technically under arrest, and that I should go to the Commissioner's office immediately after the interview with the Chief Secretary to give bail. It was then that I knew that the police, far from taking any action against these sergeants who had unwarrantedly assaulted me and caused injuries, had actually proceeded against me.

"I then went to the Commissioner's office, and there I was bound over on my own recognisance to

appear before the Magistrate's Court in Egmore at 11 a.m. on Monday, the 18th inst.

"Though I could have filed a complaint against the police for unlawfully assaulting me with lathis and using criminal force and wrongful restraint, I deliberately refrained from doing so, as I did not wish to complicate further the political tension in this country nor to take any step which might seem vindictive as being against my Christian principles. (I bear no malice whatever against the sergeants who beat me, as I assume their action was the direct result of orders and powers conferred upon them by those in charge.)

"I heard the charge sheet against me read out in Court, and I can only say that I pity the author or authors who have been driven to the necessity of fabricating such a false story in order to support their mistaken sense of prestige.

"I emphatically state that at no time (from the time I got down from the 'bus till my beating and douching was over) was I accompanied by anyone, much less by the mythical Congress Volunteers, and it is an absolute falsehood to say that I lectured, that I posted picketers, and that I dissuaded people from going to the shops to purchase foreign cloths."

In replying to the Debate, the Secretary of State for India said: "The hon. and learned Member raised the case in a very impartial and friendly manner, and, as he knows, I am looking very carefully into it. To-night I can only tell him that, from the information that has been given to me in the Debate to-day, it looks as if a mistake was

made; but I would say, in justice to the authorities in India, that I have only heard one side of the case, and that I must keep my judgment open until I have the whole of the facts of the case before me. I can, however, assure the hon. and learned Member that, if a mistake has been made in this case, or in any other case, I shall admit it, and the Government of India will admit it."

The Times of March 14 reported that "on March 8 Sir Samuel Hoare wrote to Sir J. Duncan Millar saying that, 'after a most careful inquiry by the Madras Government, it is now established that a mistake was made. It should be stated in fairness to the police that their suspicion of Dr. Paton arose out of a genuine misunderstanding, and that Dr. Paton's actions, though they were quite innocent in intention, contributed to it. You will remember, for instance, that, by his own statement published in the Press, he showed that he returned immediately to the area of disturbance after he had left it at the request of the police. But, in any case, I admit that a mistake was made, and I express my sincere regret for it and for the treatment of Dr. Paton which followed it.' "

But it is one thing to admit a mistake and quite another to repent of it. Was the mistake to use these methods against a man who has influential friends in this country, or was it to use in any case methods which bring disgrace upon the name of Britain?

APPENDIX G

MR. GANDHI AND THE ALLEGED ROMAN INTERVIEW

THROUGHOUT our European tour, I took particular notice of Mr. Gandhi's dealings with the continental Press. I had imagined that newspaper people of other nations might show a nationalist sort of sympathy with India and condemn Great Britain for her imperialist position. I had prepared myself to counter such criticisms by pointing out that it was always easy to blame other people, but that the hands of no European nation are clean of tyranny. I found there was no need, however, to defend my country in this way. On the contrary, the continental Press was often hostile to Mr. Gandhi, generally inaccurate, sometimes completely pernicious.

I used to listen to his various conversations with pressmen with great interest; I was surprised at the optimism as to future relations between Great Britain and India that coloured all he said. In many cases I gave the news to the Press myself.

Mr. Gandhi arrived in Rome on Saturday morning and left on Sunday night. He decided that these two days should be pure holiday. Journalists were refused interviews. He spent the Saturday seeing

Signor Mussolini and the Vatican. On Sunday, he saw Dr. Montessori and her school, a few other places of interest, returned home to us at Monte Mario for lunch, saw Tolstoi's daughter, the Italian Princess, and other visitors, drove into town again sight-seeing, and returned after tea. Then he bade us each good-bye, because after prayers his weekly twenty-four hours of silence would begin. A crowd of visitors who had been awaiting him for hours entered the drawing-room. He said a few words to them before prayers began. Afterwards he did not speak until Monday evening on the Mediterranean.

A day or so later, the ship's wireless informed him that while in Rome he had given an interview to the *Giornale d'Italia*, in the course of which he had said:—

“The Round Table Conference had been for Indians a long and slow agony. It had, however, served to make quite clear to the British authorities the spirit of the Indian nation and of its leaders and to mask the true intentions of England. He was returning to India in order to restart at once his struggle against England, which was to take the form of passive resistance and the boycott of British goods. He considered that the boycott would now prove a powerful means of rendering more acute the British crisis, already difficult through the devaluation of the currency and unemployment. The closing of the Indian market to all British products would signify a substantial reduction of English industrial activity, an increase of unemployment and a new depreciation of the pound.

“ Mr. Gandhi concluded his remarks by lamenting that few European countries had hitherto shown much interest in the Indian problem. That was a pity, since an independent and prosperous India would mean a richer market for the products of other nations, and Indian freedom would be manifested through commercial and intellectual exchange with all countries.”

On hearing of this interview, he and his whole party of fellow-travellers, three Europeans and four Indians, recognised it as false; realising the cruelty of his alleged words, he cabled to London at once repudiating them.

As soon as the boat touched Aden he called upon the Governor, seeking how most effectually this pernicious piece of news might be discredited. His visit to the Governor was so protracted as to endanger his punctual return to the ship, but the cable he had sent to Sir Samuel Hoare and certain other people, had eased his mind.

The alleged interview seems to have completely undone most of the good that had accrued from the Round Table Conference.

The same sort of thing occurred when Rabindranath Tagore visited Rome. A fabricated statement was published there, of which the repercussions were felt as far away as a remote village in Bengal; I occupied a house in this village which had been suddenly vacated by its Italian tenant, who was recalled post-haste to Italy because of the fancied insult to Italy in the Press.

Any lie published in the daily Press has a two

days' start, and its denial rarely overtakes it. The lie is generally a piquant morsel, passed from mouth to mouth, while its denial is comparatively dull, educational, flat, something of an anticlimax; moreover, it seems to convict of sin one of the most characteristic and time-honoured of our institutions, the Press.

When I first returned to England, I was amazed at the bitterness towards Mr. Gandhi that was noticeable everywhere, but when someone showed me a report of the famous interview, the sudden *volte-face* in the attitude of my countrymen was easily understood.

APPENDIX H

AN ARTICLE BY M. K. GANDHI

[Reprinted from *Young India*]

“ It was a good thing that Muriel Lester, the soul of Kingsley Hall, invited me to stay at her settlement and that I was able to accept the invitation. The choice lay between Kingsley Hall and Mr. Birla’s Arya Bhavan. I had no difficulty in making my choice, nor had Mr. Birla. But great pressure was put upon me by Indian friends, and that naturally, to stay at Arya Bhavan. Experience showed that Kingsley Hall was an ideal choice. It is situated among the poor of London and is dedicated purely to their service. Several women and some men under the inspiration of Muriel Lester have dedicated themselves to such service. Not a corner of the big building is used for any other purpose. There is a religious service, there are entertainments, there are lectures, billiards, reading-room, etc., for the use of the poor. There is no superfluous furniture to be found in all that settlement. The inmates occupy tiny rooms called cells. It was no joke to accommodate five of us

in that settlement. But love makes room where there is none. Four settlers vacated their cells, which were placed at our disposal. Bedding, etc., had to be borrowed. Fortunately we had all armed ourselves with sufficient blankets, and being used to squat on the floor most of the articles borrowed could be returned. But there was no doubt that my presence at the settlement put a severe tax on its time, space and other resources. But the good people would not hear of my leaving it. And to me it was a privilege to receive the loving, silent and unseen services of the members and a perennial joy to come into vital contact with the poor of the East End of London. Needless to say, I was able to live exactly as in India, and early morning walks through the streets of East London are a memory that can never be effaced. During these walks I had most intimate talks with those members who joined me and others whom Muriel allowed, for she was a vigilant guardian of my time whilst I was in the settlement, and she would get easily angry if she heard that my time was being abused by people when she was not by me.

During my stay in East London I saw the best side of human nature and was able to confirm my intuitive opinion that at bottom there was neither East nor West. And as I received the smiling greetings of the "East Enders," I knew that they had no malice in them and they wanted India to regain her independence. This experience has brought me closer to England, if such a thing was possible. For me the fight is never with individuals,

it is ever with their manners and their measures. But this intimate contact with the simple poor people of the East End, including the little children, will put me still more on my guard against any hasty action."

APPENDIX I

THE APPEAL OF RABINDRANATH TAGORE

[The following appeared in *The Times*, May 26, 1932]

To the Editor of The Times.

SIR,—We write in the hope that you will, through your columns, give publicity to the appeal for mutual good-will from Rabindranath Tagore which we enclose. This message was given to some members of the Society of Friends who lately visited India. We think that such an appeal from an Indian of so outstanding an influence should be widely known, and we believe that the public opinion of our own country is ready to welcome and respond to it.

Yours faithfully,

WILLIAM EBOR. GILBERT MURRAY.

A. D. LINDSAY. FRANCIS YOUNGHUSBAND.

May 14.

(Reprinted by permission.)

TAGORE'S MESSAGE

From the depths of the present atmosphere of suffering the cry has come for the inauguration of

a new age of faith and reconciliation, for a fellowship of understanding between races and nations alienated by cruel politics and diplomacy. We in India are ready for a fundamental change in our affairs which will bring harmony and understanding into our relationship with those who have inevitably been brought near to us. We are waiting for a gesture of good-will from both sides spontaneous and generous in its faith in humanity which will create a future of moral federation, of constructive works of public good, of the inner harmony of peace between the peoples of India and England.

The visit of our friends from England has confirmed the immediate possibility of such an intimate fellowship and truth in our mutual relationship, and I feel called upon to appeal to all who have the welfare of humanity at heart to come forward at this critical hour and courageously take upon themselves the task of fulfilling the moral responsibility which is before us, of building upon the bare foundation of faith, of acceptance of truth in a spirit of generous mutual forgiveness.

The memory of the past, however painful it may have been for us all, should never obscure the vision of the perfect—of the future which it is for us jointly to create. Indeed, our experience of the futility of suspicion and hostility must inspire us with a profounder belief in the truth of the simple fellowship of hearts, in the mighty power of creative understanding between individuals as well as nations inspired by a common urge of love.

RABINDRANATH TAGORE.

GANDHI'S RESPONSE TO TAGORE'S APPEAL

The following is Mr. Gandhi's response, received from the Indian Office on June 10 :—

Yeravda Central Prison,
4th May, 1932.

DEAR FRIEND,

I received your letter only last Saturday, together with the Poet's draft appeal. I do not know that you expect me to say anything now. But this I can say, that I should yield to no one in my desire for conciliation and peace. You may therefore depend on my doing nothing that will prevent them. Consistently with national honour, I would do everything that would promote conciliation and peace. More I may not say from behind the prison wall.

I am glad you and the other friends were able to visit India and hope that you were none the worse for its climate.

Yours sincerely,
M. K. GANDHI.

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The Hon. Sir ERIC DRUMMOND

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